

**THE DEVELOPMENT OF ACADEMIC LITERACY  
IN THE FIRST-YEAR PSYCHOLOGY COURSE  
AT RHODES UNIVERSITY:  
AN ASSESSMENT OF THE TUTORIAL PROGRAMME**

**THESIS**

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## ABSTRACT

This research is concerned with the cognitive development of students in higher education. Specifically, it is recognised that the demands facing students are different to those previously encountered in secondary education. These demands include being able to master what Strohm Kitchener (1983) calls ill-structured problems and learning the groundrules of their academic disciplines. This is termed academic literacy. Current thought in academic development proposes that students need to be shown how to mobilise their cognitive processes to meet these demands. It is argued that this is best accomplished when such activities are integrated into the discipline itself as opposed to being an add-on process. Taking into account the social and dialectical nature of learning (Vygotsky, 1978), academic development and academic literacy are seen to best occur within the tutorial system.

The purpose of this research was to evaluate the 1997 first-year Psychology tutorial programme at Rhodes University, Grahamstown to assess how academic literacy was being developed. A qualitative research approach was followed, guided by the ten stage evaluation model of education programmes (Jacobs, 1996) and an adapted version of the Context, Input, Process and Product approach to evaluation (Parlett and Hamilton cited in Calder, 1995, p.25). Using in-depth interviews, data was gathered from eight first year students, seven staff members and one programme co-ordinator. Focus groups were used to gather data from nine tutors. Further data collection techniques included observation of tutor briefing sessions and tutorials as well as documentary research. Data was analysed using qualitative data analysis techniques (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996).

The Psychology Department at Rhodes University aims to integrate the development of academic literacy into mainstream teaching at the first year level through its tutorial programme. The Department has conceptualised its understanding of academic development as the development of academic, vocational and professional literacy which is rather unique. Academic literacy is defined and conceptualised further in a list of pre-determined skills (reading, writing and general skills) to be developed incrementally. This conceptualisation of academic literacy tends to neglect to include the mobilisation of relevant cognitive processes explicitly and the implementation tends to remain implicit. A lack of tactical strategies to implement academic development is evidence of the difficulty in moving from the philosophical level of academic development to the practical level. The programme is perceived as disorganised and lacking in a co-ordinated or incremental development of the predetermined skills.

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Note on Gender

For reasons of convenience, only the masculine (he/him) is used in the text.  
Please note that in all these cases, the feminine (she/her) is implied as well.

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## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **INTRODUCTION**

This research is situated in the area of cognitive development within the context of higher education. Higher education has an important role to play in society. The core function of universities is student learning where the “most important objective is to develop students’ motivation and skills for continued learning, problem solving and application of course material after the course is over” (Smith, 1989, p.191). Minds are formed which can be critical, can verify and not accept everything they are offered. Students are created who are “capable of doing new things, not simply of repeating what other generations have done - students who are creative, inventive, and discoverers” (Piaget, cited in Phillips, 1975, p.147). The South African Green Paper on Higher Education Transformation (Department of Education, 1996) identifies the purpose of higher education as not only to meet the learning needs and aspirations of individuals through the development of their intellectual abilities and aptitudes, but also to provide the labour market with the necessary high-level competencies and expertise, to socialise enlightened, responsible and constructively critical citizens and to engage in the creation, transmission and evaluation of knowledge.

In reality, higher education institutions in South Africa are challenged to develop effective and independent learners of students who are simply unable to engage in typical university tasks successfully or in a manner which has come to be regarded as appropriate for higher education (Craig, 1989). Students however, do not necessarily lack the cognitive structures necessary to engage in the typical university tasks (Piaget, 1953; Bruner, 1964; Vygotsky, 1978). Student learning difficulties can rather be seen as problems of access to and mastery of the cognitive

processes entailed in the groundrules of the specific academic disciplines within the higher education context (Moll & Slonimsky, 1989). Each discipline then is characterised by its own groundrules which define what can be construed as knowledge and how this knowledge is explored. The groundrules define the way of thinking and doing necessary for success within a particular discipline.

If it is assumed that students are potentially able to engage successfully in higher education, opportunities need to be created through the teaching-and-learning process for students to learn how to mobilise the relevant cognitive processes entailed in the groundrules of a particular discipline. Scott (1994) argues that there are ample indications that the formal teaching-and-learning process in higher education institutions is failing to cater effectively for student learning difficulties. This means that universities need to focus on, among others, the appropriateness and effectiveness of the teaching and learning process (Scott, 1994) if student learning needs are to be effectively addressed. This, argues Scott, “is an essential condition for genuine improvement in the accessibility of higher education and hence for a real extension of the benefits of higher education to all sectors of the population” (ibid, p.6).

In response to the challenge of student learning difficulties within higher education, much academic development work is currently being conducted within the South African higher education context (Badsha, 1994, Israel, 1995; Drewett, 1995; Van der Riet, Gilbert, Kelly & Fischer, 1996; Caldwell, 1997; Eastmond, 1997; Paulson & Small, 1997). Drewett (1995, p.141) points out that “there has been a gradual transformation in Academic Development Programme (ADP) practice over the past few years towards a more holistic and integrated approach to student learning, in which the emphasis is on universities and departments changing, in order to

provide more effective forms of instruction”.

In order to overcome student learning difficulties, academic development work would be focussed on creating opportunities for students to learn how to mobilise the relevant cognitive processes for success in the higher education context. As Johns (1990, p.212) points out though, “opportunities for direct initiation into the academic culture are few and the demands of the already-competent within the culture are many”. Students need to be socialised into the academic cultural milieu as well as acquire the knowledge and perspectives of the different academic disciplines. Vygotsky (1978) provides a useful analysis with which to view academic development when he highlights the social and dialectical nature of learning, providing information on how students can “crack the cultural code” (Bock, 1988) of a particular academic discipline or be socialised into the cultural milieu of a particular academic discipline. Through the socialisation process students can internalise the groundrules necessary for academic success within the discipline. Given the social nature of tutorials, the tutorial programme of an academic discipline is an ideal site for the creation of opportunities for students to experience academic literacy tasks and processes and so learn to mobilise the relevant cognitive processes or academic literacy necessary for success within a discipline. Tutorials in and of themselves however, do not ensure automatic success in acquiring academic literacy. Rather, the tutorial programme needs to be designed and implemented with the aim of developing the necessary academic literacy within a specific academic discipline.

This research is concerned with a programme evaluation of the first year Psychology tutorial programme at Rhodes University, Grahamstown. Since the evaluation is of a programme which for the first time aims to develop the academic literacy of students, the concern is more with

understanding the processes of the programme than with evaluating the outcome of the programme.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **1. OVERVIEW**

The aim of this chapter is to provide the necessary theoretical background to the programme evaluation of the first-year Psychology tutorial programme. It begins by reviewing the learning expectations and nature of the higher education context, pointing out that some students face learning difficulties within this context. Next a review of relevant cognitive theory develops a theoretical understanding of the nature of student learning difficulties. Students do not necessarily lack the inherent abstract cognitive capability necessary for success in the higher education context. Rather, they have not learnt to mobilise the particular cognitive processes embraced in the groundrules of each discipline which are required to deal with the problems typical of the particular discipline. Academic literacy needs to be developed not as an adjunct “skill” but by and through engagement with learning in the mainstream disciplines themselves. Given the social nature of tutorials, the tutorial system within individual disciplines is put forward as the ideal site for the development of academic literacy within the higher education context. The focus then turns to the tutorial programme of a discipline as a whole and concentrates on the design and implementation of a tutorial programme for the specific purpose of developing the academic literacy of first-year students.

#### **2. LEARNING EXPECTATIONS IN THE HIGHER EDUCATION CONTEXT**

In the university context, students are typically expected to acquire, develop and learn the

necessary content and reasoning styles/forms of argument (or countless processes) to produce “answers” in a test/exam situation which will allow the student to pass course and degree requirements (Craig, 1989). To pass, students are typically expected to produce answers that not only indicate that the information and knowledge shared or taught has been acquired, but that the student has the ability to use the information and knowledge in an abstract, sophisticated manner.

In the higher education context, students usually face what Strohm Kitchener (1983) and Churchman (1971) respectively refer to as ill-structured problems or dialectical problems. These are problems for which there is no single, unequivocal solution which can be determined at the present moment by employing a particular decision-making procedure. Ill-structured problems are typical of the type of problems where there is seldom a single, right or wrong answer which is available to students. Rather, students are confronted with opposing or contradictory evidence and opinion which requires that they consider alternative arguments, seek out new evidence and evaluate the reliability of data and sources of information. These are typically the kind of problems students face in the discipline of Psychology at the higher education level. Strohm Kitchener (1983) distinguishes these problems from puzzles, which are well-structured problems with only one correct final solution, which can be guaranteed by using a specific known and effective procedure or formula.

To deal successfully with ill-structured problems, sophisticated forms of cognitive activity are required. These are characterised as the cognitive processes (units of structure in some combination necessary to complete a particular contextualised task) an individual commands to monitor the epistemic nature of problems and the truth value of alternative solutions (Strohm

Kitchener, 1983). Strohm Kitchener (1983) points out that three levels of cognitive processing must be distinguished to account for the complex monitoring which adults engage in when faced with ill-structured problems. At the first level, individuals enter into cognitive tasks such as reading, perceiving, computing and memorising. At the second level, metacognitive processes include knowledge about cognitive tasks (e.g., how to memorise a list of words), about particular strategies that may be invoked to solve the task (e.g., saying the word out loud), of when and how the strategy should be applied (e.g., when one is required to remember the different stages of Piaget's theory) and about the success or failure of any of these processes. At the third level, epistemic cognition is characterised as the cognitive processes an individual invokes to monitor the epistemic nature of problems and the truth value of alternative solutions. These processes will become clearer as the discussion progresses.

Using this approach, Strohm Kitchener (1983) would argue that in tackling a problem, students first need to acquire the relevant knowledge. This requires first level cognitive processes such as reading and remembering. As students engage in first-order cognitive processes, they monitor their progress using second level strategies. These strategies allow them to determine their effectiveness in for example, reading and remembering and may become aware of not understanding certain parts of the information. This metacognitive experience may lead to reading more closely or to the use of a different cognitive strategy such as asking lecturers, peers or tutors about the information they do not understand. If complementary or antithetical solutions to the problem emerge, in order for the student to respond effectively to the problem as an ill-structured problem, he must have epistemic knowledge that each solution may have some validity and that there may be no absolutely correct choice between them and to develop a strategy to solve the problem. The epistemic cognitive level explains how students monitor their

problem solving when engaged in ill-structured problems. It has to do with reflections on the limits of knowledge, the certainty of knowledge and the criteria for knowing and is influenced by the student's epistemic assumptions. Students who operate from an epistemic framework which assumes that knowledge is absolute and truth is effectively computable would find the framework inappropriate for the kinds of ill-structured problems engaged in within the university context. When faced with ill-structured problems then, students must be able to ask appropriate epistemic questions such as, is the problem solvable? If so, how is it solvable and are there strategies available to solve it? If these epistemic questions are not asked, they will proceed as if they are in a puzzle-solving situation and merely regurgitate information known to them as a solution or attempt to solve the problem by applying a specific procedure or formula known to them. However, once the epistemic nature of the problem and strategies available to solve it are identified, individuals must still monitor their own progress on specific aspects of the task. Thus, both level-3 and level-2 cognitive processes are used to monitor progress in dealing with and solving ill-structured problems.

A solution to an ill-structured problem then requires that the student possesses or applies knowledge and understanding relevant to the problem but also requires that reason and argument be brought to bear on the issues (Strohm Kitchener, 1983). A solution needs to be generated by the student by synthesising or integrating information from diverse sources (*ibid*), evaluating the information from the sources (Rescher, 1976), making judgments about information on what may be opposing sides of the problem (Toulmin, 1958) and constructing an argument as a reasonable solution (Rescher, 1976; Toulmin, Reike & Janik, 1979).

Bloom's (1956) taxonomy which lists six increasingly complex levels of human cognitive tasks

is valuable in understanding the cognitive processes students are expected to engage in when generating a solution to ill-structured problems. These cognitive tasks are identified below:

- a) Knowledge (The ability to recall what has been learned)

Acquiring knowledge is a very basic task of all human intellectual tasks and is characterised by rote learning. Verbs such as “define”, “describe”, “provide an overview” and “review” indicate the level of intellectual functioning required.

- b) Comprehension (The ability to show that learned material is understood)

Verbs such as “explain”, “summarise” and “estimate” indicate the need to understand material.

- c) Application (The ability to use learned material in a new or novel task)

Here verbs such as “demonstrate”, “calculate”, “solve”, “prove” and “conclude” are used, requiring students to apply knowledge to new situations by using rules and making generalisations.

- d) Analysis (The ability to break up information logically into its component parts)

Words such as “compare”, “contrast” and “analyse” and “distinguish between” are used to test the ability to break information up into component parts.

- e) Synthesis (The ability to structure information to form a new pattern or whole)

Words such as “recommend”, “develop” and “indicate the relationship between” are used to test for the ability to bring information together to form a new structure.

- f) Evaluation (The ability to evaluate the worth of material, theories, methods, information, etcetera for a given purpose)

“Critically analyse”, “evaluate” and “provide your opinion of” are all used to test the highest level of intellectual functioning.

To complicate the expectations of the higher education context, the cognitive processes necessary for success within the higher education context are entailed in the groundrules of each of the different academic disciplines (Moll & Slonimsky, 1989). As Spivey, Mathison, Goggin and Greene (1992, p.1) argue, each discipline is basically “a group whose members share assumptions about what objects are appropriate for examination and discussion, what operating functions are performed on those objects, what constitutes evidence and validity, and what formal conventions are followed in that discourse”. Supporting these authors would be Becher (cited in Fisher, 1995) and Clark (1987). Clark (1987, p.128) writes:

From an organisational perspective we may claim that higher education has an essential nature. That nature begins with knowledge cast in the form of

specialised bundles that have been awarded legitimacy by academic groups and are carried by them over space and time. Around those bundles they develop characteristic compounds of forms of work, belief and authority, with each of these elements having its own peculiar configuration. To be organised around multifarious subjects is to have a peculiar structure of work which is found in only a weak degree in other sectors of society. The discipline is the touchstone.

Each discipline then is a social group or discourse community characterised by its own groundrules which define not only textual conventions but also ways in which what counts as knowledge within specific disciplines is explored and construed (Bouhey, 1994). The groundrules define not as such a set of skills as much as the structure of values, attitudes and way of thinking and doing necessary for success within a particular discipline (Langer, 1987; Trow cited in Fisher, 1995). As Fisher (1995, p.7) then argues, once “formal” admission to the realm of higher education has been secured, “access means more than simply admission to the institution - ‘formal’ access - but entails students’ retention and socialisation within the institution, and their growing intellectual and social competence, advancement and success within the specialised forms of knowledge - the academic disciplines - which are at the core of the academic enterprise”. Morrow (1992) conceptualised this as “epistemological access” to higher education, but Fisher (1995, p.7) prefers to call access in this more complex sense “substantive access” .

Fisher (1995) argues that students need to acquire not only the explicit knowledge (as in the content of the curriculum) but also the tacit knowledge (for example, learning to understand and interpret the values, beliefs or social practices of a particular community of scholars). Starfield

(1994) similarly argues that other than focussing on mere content of the curriculum, other levels of knowledge, such as how a discipline poses and solves problems, how it conceives of and defines knowledge, what forms of explanation and argument are allowable and how new knowledge is produced should also be part of the curricula (Starfield, 1994). In conceptualising courses, Amos and Quinn (1997) consequently argue that less emphasis should be placed on the content students are required to learn and more on the skills needed for coping academically as well as in their future careers. The observation of Tierney and Rhoads (cited in Fisher, 1995) that the undergraduate years should also serve to introduce individuals to the prospective roles and expectations of the various professions would support Amos and Quinn's (1997) point that students be prepared to cope in their future careers as well. This, argues Fisher (ibid), although not the sole purpose of university education, is nonetheless critical to students' success and advancement. It is where the department inducts students:

... into the discipline, transmitting skills and knowledge, and shaping and creating values and attitudes regarding what knowledge is and how best to pursue it. This component of ... education, the socialisation of ... students into a structure of values, attitudes and ways of thinking and feeling, is perhaps the most important single function that departments perform (Trow cited in Fisher, 1995, p.10).

Craig (1989) points out that some students experience learning difficulties within the university learning context. In a speech delivered at the Centre for Education Development, Bengu (1997, p.1) pointed to the problem in our tertiary institutions claiming that "a significant part of the problem is related to the poor quality of pupils emerging from our secondary schools". To be able to address student learning difficulties effectively within the higher education context, it is

necessary not only to understand the higher education context in terms of what is expected of students within this context but also to understand the nature of student learning difficulties from a cognitive point of view.

### **3. UNDERSTANDING THE NATURE OF STUDENT LEARNING DIFFICULTIES**

Hall (1993, 1994) argues that human beings possess an acquired need to express their innate, biologically ordained competence. This he calls the competence motive. The attainment of human competence is a natural part of the life process and is what ensures the survival of the species. For Hall (1994), human beings possess the ability and desire to do what needs to be done to survive and argues that such competence abounds. Many other authors (Fromm, 1949; Argyris, 1957; Erikson, 1973; Terkel, 1975; Knowles, 1986; Maritz, 1988) support this argument.

In line with his presumption of competence, Hall (1993, p.45) argues that “we must recognise that, in dealing with other people, all of us - managers, parents, teachers, leaders of every sort - are dealing with potentiality” and that there is a need for the existence of the conditions which facilitate the release of competence. Fromm (cited in Hall, 1993, p.46-47) similarly points out for example that a tree is potentially present in the seed but it does not mean that a tree must develop from every seed. In fact, for Fromm (ibid) the concept of potentiality has no meaning except in connection with the specific conditions required for its actualisation.

Consistent with this argument, Craig (1989) asserts that rather than assume students are not intellectually capable of meeting the demands of University, one should consider that such

individuals are making use of the incorrect cognitive processes. Accordingly, in understanding student learning difficulties within the higher education context, it is important that students be seen as abstract thinkers who have the ability to engage in, benefit from and master formal education but make use of incorrect cognitive processes in grappling with the typically ill-structured problems encountered in the various academic disciplines at the higher education level. Cognitive development literature (Piaget, 1953; Bruner, 1964; Vygotsky, 1978) provides support for this understanding of student learning difficulties as problems of access to and mastery of the groundrules of the specific academic disciplines within the higher education context.

Bizzell (1982) consequently argues that higher education ought not to pretend to allow people access to higher education by admitting them to university and then prevent them from really attaining higher education by not admitting them to the various discourse communities that characterise each discipline. Scott (1994) notes that internationally and locally, inadequate provision for students to develop discipline-specific skills affect the student's ability to succeed academically within the higher education context. There is particular concern, he argues, about provision for students to develop academic skills, which is not taking place effectively either in the majority of schools or in traditional higher education curricula (*ibid*). Supporting Scott (1994) is the observation by Johns (1990, p.212) that, "opportunities for direct initiation into the academic culture are few and the demands of the already-competent within the culture are many".

The next section considers the potential of academic development in providing opportunities for students to learn to mobilise the relevant cognitive processes within specific academic disciplines

in the higher education context.

#### **4. ADDRESSING STUDENT LEARNING DIFFICULTIES WITHIN THE HIGHER EDUCATION CONTEXT: THE POTENTIAL OF ACADEMIC DEVELOPMENT**

Scott (1994) argues that if the complex student learning difficulties in higher education are to be addressed effectively, it is clear that academic development work is required. Such academic development needs to be aimed at preparing all students to mobilise the cognitive processes required for success within each of the various academic disciplines.

The approach taken in this academic development work is crucial if it is to be successful. It needs to influence and impact the learning-teaching situation in such a way that students can learn to mobilise the required cognitive process. However, before exploring the appropriate approach academic development would need to adopt it is important to review traditional academic development perspectives and how academic development as a field has developed.

In an attempt to understand academic development, the discussion begins by considering Morphet's (1994) interpretation of academic development, namely as a need for policy, capacity and support. The policy discourse has its origin in the initiatives of the 1980's which had the objective to reconstitute the apartheid universities and technikons as centres of learning rather than tools of white state domination. It is consequently concerned with changing the procedures, rules and roles which constitute the operation of the higher education system. The experience of individual teachers and learners is consequently placed in the background. The capacity discourse has its origins in the structural inequality in the higher education system. The principal

issues are the resources and the benefits that people have or have not had. In the support discourse, the developmental emphasis is person-centred either in terms of increasing personal confidence and capacity or in terms of individual academic performance and career. This discourse involves two groups namely, those with the expertise and confidence who teach, the teachers and those who seek it, the learners. Teaching and learning are seen as two separate and distinct endeavours. This view of teaching and learning however, restricts the role of academic development to a marginalised support function. It is removed from the mainstream teaching and learning process and caters for a distinct group of so-called disadvantaged students. Here academic development is an “add-on” or ameliorative process outside a particular academic department, driven by experts on academic support. This “add-on” approach to academic development is inadequate. Potter (1996, p.58) points out that academic development programmes which had achieved less positive results “attempted to provide general rather than discipline-specific support, and those programmes run at a distance from the mainstream teaching provided by departments”. Academic development work needs to be integral to the teaching of each discipline.

This is important if students are to learn to mobilise the cognitive processes entailed in the groundrules of each academic discipline they seek to study. As Craig (1989, p.166) points out, “all students have the capabilities to fulfil the demands of university tasks, but the learning-teaching situation does not elicit these competencies and/or performance in some cases”. Academic development needs to be more than growth, it is about growth and change. For Bulman (1997, p.9), academic development is essentially concerned with the processes of change in teaching and learning in higher education. This argument for a more integrated approach to academic development is supported by a number of authors (Bulman & Parkinson, 1991; Frame

& Seneque, 1991; Millar & Boughey, 1991; Rajah, 1991; Boughey, 1994; Scott, 1994; Drewett, 1995; Amos & Quinn, 1997) and in recent years, there is evidence of Academic Development focussing increasingly on efforts to improve the effectiveness of mainstream academic courses by such means as integrating Academic Development approaches into mainstream courses and by seeking to influence the practice of regular teaching staff (Scott, 1994, Amos & Quinn, 1997). In a recent study in KwaZulu Natal by Bulman (1997), it was found that a growing number of academic development practitioners maintained that academic development needed to be more holistic, happening at the interface of the teaching and learning process (i.e. in the curriculum).

Van der Riet et al. (1996, p.12) argue that the traditional division between learning and teaching collapses in light of contemporary approaches in the field of cognition. Learning and teaching is seen as taking place not in the heads or personal lives of individuals but within relationships between people and the contexts in which they operate. This stands in contrast to the traditional academic development perspectives already reviewed where teaching and learning are seen as two separate and distinct endeavours.

Academic development “no longer becomes a problem that lies within a particular group or groups of students, but is a process in which a range of actors in different situations share responsibility for growing into academic life” (Van der Riet, et al., 1996). There is consequently a need to develop academic literacy not as an adjunct ‘skill’ but by and through engagement with learning in the mainstream academic disciplines themselves (Langer, 1987; Boughey, 1994), aimed at preparing all students to deal with the set of competencies required at the tertiary education level. Also, when skills are taught divorced from the subject content and out of context of the academic course, students find it difficult to make the transfer as each discipline has its

own set of rules and conventions which the student has to internalise in order to learn effectively within that discipline.

The work of Vygotsky (1978) is particularly useful in understanding what this shared responsibility for learning constitutes. Vygotsky's (ibid) theory of cognitive development in particular, highlights mediation as the process whereby a more experienced person structures and conducts an interaction with another, less experienced other, over a particular task through the medium of language. It is the process whereby learning is internalised by the learner within a specific context and is the key to understanding how and why people develop higher mental processes. For Vygotsky (1978), humans master the tools and signs of the culture they are part of through interaction with others already part of that culture, to serve their own needs and as they do this there is a transformation in the way they think and reason. They learn to interpret and understand the groundrules and so become part of the culture. The groundrules are learnt from socially meaningful literacy activities where with experience, the cognitive skills required to complete the activity and also the socially or culturally accepted way to evaluate the meaning and relative success of that activity, are internalised (ibid). Students consequently develop the epistemic framework consistent with Strohm Kitchener's (1983) third level of cognition and the cognitive skills as identified by Bloom (1956) necessary to deal with the ill-structured problem. With respect to the social dimensions of knowledge production, dissemination and acquisition, Luria (1976, p.3) argues that:

it seems surprising that the science of psychology has avoided the idea that many mental processes are social and historical in origin, or that important manifestations of human consciousness have been directly shaped by the basic

practices of human activity and the actual form of culture.

Vygotsky (1978) generates an understanding of human beings internalising the culture of the external environment they are part of. The internal reconstruction of external activity, for Vygotsky (1978), is primarily concerned with social processes and with semiotic mechanisms (language) as the mechanisms that mediate social and individual functioning. The role that language plays in grappling with ideas, developing an understanding of concepts and constructing meaning is widely accepted (Bruner, 1971; Vygotsky, 1978; Langer, 1987; Dison, Quinn, Nelson & Collett, 1996). Language and thought are inextricably linked. Nightingale (cited in Taylor, Ballard, Beasley, Bock, Clanchy & Nightingale, 1988, p.81) points out for example that “the language of the subject must include the processes for modes of analysis and argument appropriate to the subject, because the content and the language of the subject are inseparable”.

It is consequently argued by Vygotsky (1978) that learning grows out of social dialectical interaction within a specific context and that the joint learning activities support higher levels of cognitive development. What is learnt in the external world with the help of another is internalised and in the process brings about internal transformations, allowing the student to learn to mobilise the cognitive processes necessary for success. The contextual setting is consequently important in developing the functional value of literacy behaviours, in each case reflecting different modes of thinking and reasoning (Langer, 1987).

Whilst the social and dialectical nature of learning has been identified above, this understanding is enriched by understanding that learning precedes development. For Vygotsky (1978),

instruction creates what he calls the “zone of proximal development”. Fischer and Van der Riet (1997, p.20) point out that “it is through integrating academic development in the curriculum that the opportunity for creating the zone of proximal development occurs and thus the competencies inherent in academic literacy can be attained”. The zone of proximal development notes Vygotsky (p.87), is “a tool through which the internal course of development can be understood” within a particular context. Vygotsky (1978, p.86) defines the zone of proximal development as “the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers”. As Tyson (1987, p.144) notes:

The role of older members of a culture as mediators between person and environment is most effective in the zone of proximal development. A person can only imitate those actions that are within his developmental level, although the action may go beyond his current capabilities. Thus, from a developmental point of view, the best learning is that which operates at the threshold of the next potential level of development. Learning can be said to create the zone of proximal development by awakening a variety of developmental processes that first become operative in interaction with a tutor. Subsequently, the processes are internalised and become part of the student’s developmental achievement and can function independently without support from the tutor. At this stage, regulation by others is replaced by self regulation.

Vygotsky (1978, p.86) argues that this zone “defines those functions that have not yet matured but are in the process of maturation” accounting for “not only the cycles and maturation

processes that have already been completed but also those processes that are currently in a state of formation” (ibid, p.87). Vygotsky (1978, p.86) refers to the “... buds or flowers of development rather than the fruits of development”. Collaboration or mediation with another person, either an adult or a more competent peer, in the zone of proximal development thus leads to development in culturally appropriate ways.

## **5. DEVELOPING THE ACADEMIC LITERACY OF STUDENTS**

Within the higher education context, the appropriate discourse of academic development is academic literacy. Dison, et al. (1996) argue that the development of what is called academic literacy is at the heart of the student’s ability to succeed at university, applicable to both first and second language speakers of English. Very narrowly, academic literacy refers to the student’s ability to read and write effectively within the university context in order to succeed from one level to another (Leibowitz, 1995). A review of the literature (Ballard & Clanchy cited in Taylor et al., 1988; Boughey, 1994; Leibowitz, 1995; Newman & Trechs, 1996; Amos & Quinn, 1997) reveals that this narrow view of literacy is commonly used. However, given the understanding of the expectations of the higher education context together with the understanding of student learning difficulties developed thus far, this restricted view of literacy is too limiting if students’ learning difficulties are to be addressed effectively. Langer (1987, p.1) argues that “because of this restricted view, our solutions to very pragmatic issues of literacy learning and instruction have suffered”.

Leibowitz (1995, p.34) points out that a broader definition of the term academic literacy “would include being able to read and write within the academic context with independence,

understanding and a level of engagement in the work". This definition however is also narrow in the sense that it neglects to focus on the learning expectations of the higher education context where students need to approach problems as ill-structured in nature and mobilise appropriate cognitive processes in order to generate a solution to the problem. Langer (1987) provides a broader view of literacy which is in line with the learning expectation of the higher education context. This socio-cognitive perspective is where literacy can be thought of as a tool in the sense that the "focus is not just on the reading and writing, but also on the thinking that accomplishes it" (ibid, p.2). For Langer (ibid, p.4) literacy is "a purposeful activity - people read, write, talk, and think about real ideas and information in order to ponder and extend what they know, to communicate with others, to present their points of view, and to understand and be understood". Literacy is not a set of skills as it is a way of thinking and doing, where the actual "practices of literacy, what they are and what they mean for a given society, depend on the context" (Langer, 1987, p.5). Langer's (1987) perspective incorporates Strohm Kitchener's (1983) as well as Bloom's (1956) contribution to the understanding of student learning difficulties. Using Langer's (ibid) perspective then, to cope effectively with the ill-structured problems encountered in the higher education context, students need to develop the practices of literacy (relevant form of epistemic assumptions and metacognitive strategies) which depend on the context. They need to develop the way of thinking, to learn how to mobilise the necessary cognitive processes required for success in dealing with the ill-structured problems. Students need to approach problems as if they are ill-structured in nature, be encouraged to think broadly and deeply about ideas and content, to learn how to do new things and to function using Bloom's (1956) higher order cognitive skills. These are the skills of applying, analysing, synthesising and evaluating information.

In developing the academic literacy of students, Vygotsky's (1978) ideas contribute much to the understanding of how abstract thinking students can learn to mobilise their cognitive operational capacities in relation to specific situations and tasks (cognitive processes which are entailed in the ground rules which characterise the university context) to become academically literate. Academic literacy or what Vygotsky (1978) calls the "tools" or signs of the higher education context need to be internalised by the students so that they can become "flexible and independent thinkers" (Langer, 1987, p.17). Rogoff (1990, p.1) tends to capture the essence of learning in pointing out that it is best viewed as the "transformation of participation" rather than the "transmission of knowledge" or "the acquisition or discovery of knowledge".

Tutorials designed for the exploration of the nature and limits of knowing and knowledge may consequently be a sound tool for the development of academic literacy. This is especially so when given the sites potential for "dialogue, conversation, debate, discussion and argument among peers" (Craig, 1989). The discussion consequently now turns to focus on integrating the development of academic literacy into mainstream teaching and learning through the tutorial programme.

## **6. INTEGRATING ACADEMIC LITERACY DEVELOPMENT INTO MAINSTREAM TEACHING AND LEARNING THROUGH THE TUTORIAL SYSTEM**

It has been argued that cognitive theory helps us to understand university students as formal operational thinkers who have not learnt to mobilise the particular cognitive processes required to deal with the typically ill-structured problems encountered within the higher education

context. To address student learning difficulties, an integrated approach to the development of academic literacy is required. Here academic literacy is taught by and through engagement with the teaching and learning processes in the mainstream disciplines themselves. The interaction of students with each other and with a tutor in organised group situations such as tutorials presents the ideal context for interactive or communicative relationships where students can develop the academic literacy valued by a specific discipline within the higher education context (Bruner, 1964; Langer, 1987; Vygotsky, 1978). Caldwell (1997, p.142) writes that “the tutorial system, with knowledgeable peers as facilitators, provides the ideal site for the initial incorporation of skills teaching into the curriculum”. It is here that those who are already part of the higher education system can mediate with students, especially in their first year of study, in the zone of proximal development so that academic literacy can be developed. “Small group teaching is generally considered to be better than lecturing in achieving ‘deep learning’; that is, learning which leads to the understanding of principles and concepts, problem solving and critical thinking, as opposed to ‘surface learning’, which involves rote-learning of often unrelated facts” (Radloff & Murphy, 1992, p.21). Pastoll (1992) claims that students get information through print and are motivated through lectures, but it is through tutorials that they learn. Also, if managed correctly and effectively, students can develop positive feelings about the subject and are more likely to feel in charge of their own learning (Radloff & Murphey, 1992). However, simply putting students into small groups does not guarantee superior learning outcomes (Radloff & Murphey, 1992; Case, 1997), let alone the development of academic literacy. The tutorial programme consequently needs to be designed and implemented for the purpose of developing academic literacy.

One of the first steps in developing an effective tutorial programme is to have a vision of

academic development (Fischer & Van der Riet, 1997), identifying the academic literacy goals to be developed in the teaching and learning process. With regards to tutorial programmes, Potter (1996) points out that those programmes which had achieved positive results tended to have clear focus and direction. Brophy and Alleman (1991) also highlight the need for major long-term goals. This vision however, needs to be supported by an underlying philosophy where academic development is seen to be an integral concept in the curriculum and thus the Department's responsibility. Such a vision with its underlying philosophy can provide direction and result in agreement on important operational issues in the development of academic literacy, such as the design and implementation of the programme.

The tutorial programme needs to be designed in such a way as to meet the academic literacy goals. It needs to provide opportunities for students to experience academic literacy tasks and processes so that they can learn to mobilise the cognitive processes entailed in the groundrules which characterise each discipline within higher education (Moll & Slonimsky, 1989). The programme needs to develop the competencies in an incremental process. This is where "more and more academic literacy competencies are acquired with increasing levels of competency during the course of the learners' educative experience" (Fischer & Van der Riet, 1997, p.19). The tasks need to cohere as an interrelated set designed to move students towards major goals (Brophy & Alleman, 1991). Dixie (1996, p.53) refers to this as scaffolding, arguing that "at the beginning of the year there is much scaffolding - help and hints - which supports the students as they tackle the worksheets". This scaffolding they argue, is gradually removed as the year progresses.

Another important element of an effective tutorial programme which fosters academic

development is the awareness and skills of staff as regards what is required/viewed as appropriate academic development. Academic staff are the actors of the higher education context who are the most absorbed into and part of the culture (discourse or interpretive community) of their relevant discipline. They take the discourse of their discipline so for granted that it is never explicitly taught but acquired by sustained involvement in the relevant cultural milieu (Becher cited in Fisher, 1995). Staff need to understand the importance of consciously or explicitly socialising students into the cultural milieu, to “make explicit to both themselves and their students the language of their discipline” (Amos & Quinn, 1995, p.189). Staff can “no longer teach content only in the hope that the pennies (about knowledge) will drop spontaneously” (Craig, 1989, p.169). Craig (ibid) argues that “we have to make explicit and teach the nature of knowledge and the limits of these in order to allow for the adaptation of the learner to typical university tasks” (ibid). The purposes of tasks need to be made clear to students and the cognitive strategies that students should employ in working on the tasks need to be modelled for students (Brophy & Alleman, 1991; Radloff & Murphey, 1992). The role of academic tasks in the creation of the zone of proximal development which would access the potential development of the student rather than solely their actual development needs to be understood by staff (Fischer & Van der Riet, 1997). Academic staff need to design tutorial tasks for the specific purpose of providing students with the opportunity to experience academic literacy processes which act as building blocks towards the vision. If the desired learning experiences are to occur, tasks need to be “designed for the exploration of the nature and limits of knowing and knowledge” (Craig, 1989, p.169). Brophy & Alleman (1991) argue that the key to the effectiveness of a tutorial task is its cognitive engagement potential. This is the degree to which the task gets students thinking actively about and applying content. Also, in light of the social and dialectical nature of learning, Pastoll (1992) argues that tasks need to be designed to provoke

participation and discussion.

With respect to students, Pastoll (1992) points out that one should never assume that if information is present, learning will automatically occur because learning is a highly active process which we perform using information. The development of academic literacy requires that students are active participants in their own education, learning to increase their levels of academic literacy during the course of their undergraduate degree (Fischer & Van der Riet, 1997). Students need to realise that during the course of their education, academic development will need to occur. In addition, they need to seek that development and be active players willing to engage in their own learning (Fischer & Van der Riet, 1997). The student, argue Fischer and Van der Riet (1997), must develop an awareness of the process of meeting the academic literacy requirements and that it is only through experience that the student can come to a true understanding of what such requirements are. The academic development goals need to be integrated into the curriculum content where the student grapples with the ill-structured problems of the content while at the same time develops academic literacy. As Craig (1989, p.169) argues “the nature and limits of knowledge and knowing must “ride” on the back of subject-specific content in order to be effective”. This should allow students to exercise their unique (human) capacity or express their competence motive (Hall, 1993), to construct knowledge from their interaction with the objects of knowledge contained in typical university tasks.

The experience of participating in tutorials allows students to “see models of literate behaviour as other people engage in literacy activities, and when they talk and ask questions about what is happening, why, and how” (Langer, 1987, p.11). Fredericks (cited in Pastoll, 1992, p.32) argues that students should have “as many opportunities as possible to acquire wisdom for

themselves; that is, to own the discovery of a new learning insight or connection and to express that discovery to others". Becher (cited in Fisher, 1995) argues for the sustained involvement of students in a relevant cultural milieu to acquire the "tacit knowledge" which is so taken for granted by those who possess it that it is never explicitly taught. This involvement which Becher (ibid) argues for is similar to Vygotsky's (1978) mediation. The involvement for Becher (cited in Fisher, 1995, p.10) includes:

the mentoring, role modelling and direct supervision and guidance provided by practitioners of the discipline, within the institutional and operational contexts - the departments and research enterprises - where the disciplines and specialisations are rooted, and via the networks, of faculty members, academic journals and societies etcetera, through which they spread and grow.

The student tutor along with the staff and students also plays a critical role in the development of academic literacy. Although a first year student will perceive the lecturer as the authority, they will view the senior student as being successful in the system and an authority, of sorts, on how to achieve the desired outcome (Mather, 1997). The student tutor is ideally positioned to influence the first year students (ibid). While their level of specialisation is not as advanced as that of lecturers, it is through the tutor's closeness to the undergraduate students and the perspectives they have on the teaching and learning process, and the university degree that places a tutor in a particularly advantageous position with respect to tutoring (Potter, 1996). Tutors' insights are consequently of particular value in terms of their ability to interpret the requirements of the degree to undergraduate students and act as mediators in the teaching and learning process. They need to model the cognitive strategies that students should employ in working on the tasks

set by lecturers (Brophy & Alleman, 1991). They consequently need to understand the importance and place of academic development and understand and assume their roles as mediators, running the tutorial in such a way as to create an environment for the development of academic literacy.

The tutorial needs to provide the social environment within which all members can participate in discussions where the tutor acts as facilitator of the learning process. A learning environment dealing with the academic literacy requirements of the specific discipline needs to be created, where the teacher or tutor acts as a facilitator rather than the fount of all knowledge (Radloff and Murphy, 1992, p.21). Such an environment is one where there are fewer rather than more people (between five and seven members), there are peers rather than authority figures, there is encouragement to talk and support and tasks encourage descriptions of students' own interpretations rather than providing either right or wrong answers (Pastoll, 1992). If tutors are to mediate effectively, then tutors should meet before the tutorial in order to work through the literacy tasks and processes as a group, with the staff member acting as mediator and giving input where necessary (Case, 1997).

## **7. EVALUATION OF ACADEMIC DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES**

In the above discussion, it is clear that there is a need for academic development work and that the focus needs to be on developing the academic literacy of students in an integrated manner within a specific academic discipline.

Programme evaluation as the means by which programmes of study can be put under the

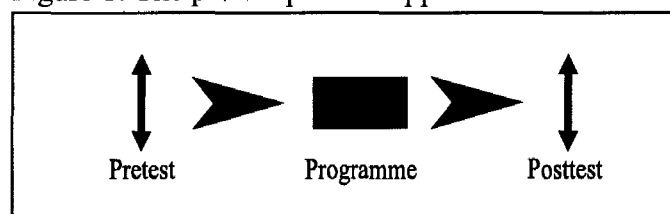
spotlight and tested for their effectiveness is usually clearly recognised in educational institutions (Calder, 1995). The aim of evaluation in the case of any organisation, argues Calder (1995, p.18), “must be to support that organisation in achieving its goals”. As a process which can be utilised across the whole range of activities in an educational institution (Calder, 1995), it is a useful tool to review academic development programmes and provide useful information which can be used to modify the programme.

A number of authors (Patton, 1986; King, Morris & Fitz-Gibbon, 1987; Rossi & Freeman, 1985) describe programme evaluation as the systematic collection of information through the application of social science research procedures. This information usually is about the conceptualisation and design, implementation and outcomes of programmes for use by specific people to reduce uncertainties, improve effectiveness, and make decisions with regard to what those programmes are doing and affecting. Calder (1995) distinguished between two types of evaluation, summative evaluation and formative evaluation, on the grounds of the fundamental purpose of the evaluation. The purpose of a formative approach is to improve and increase the effectiveness of the intervention. For Calder (1995) this type of evaluation is typically used when the intention is to modify a programme or to revise the instruction by reorganising or supplanting it. Formative evaluation is often used synonymously with process evaluation which focuses on the delivery of a programme. Scheirer (1994, p.41-42) argues that “unless the programme is described and its delivery measured with process evaluation, impact evaluations risk assessing non-events or activities very different from those intended by programme developers”. In addition, formative evaluation “provides feedback on the quality of ongoing intervention delivery, information that can stimulate greater efforts to make delivery congruent with an intended programme” (ibid). Formative evaluation is a natural compliment to summative or

impact evaluation. A summative approach is concerned with the impact of an intervention, often using the demonstration of outcomes as evidence. The intention with summative evaluation is to “form a judgement or conclusion about either the absolute or the relative merits of whatever is the focus of the evaluation” (Calder, 1995, p.22).

In addition to the two types of evaluation, Calder (1995) identifies three broad methods of inquiry which can be used in carrying out evaluations. These include the pretest-posttest approach, the illuminative approach and the CIPP approach. In discussing the pretest-posttest approach (figure 1), Calder (1995) points to the long tradition of trying to set up experimental designs in education but argues that the approach has limitations because of the problems of trying to control all the variables except for the experimental one.

Figure 1: The pretest-posttest approach

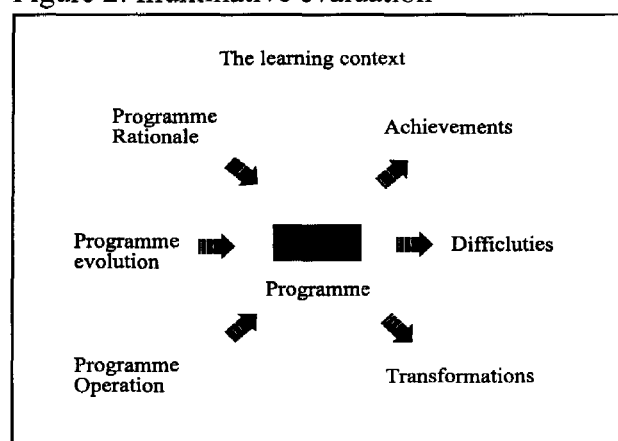


Source: Calder, 1995, p.24

Calder (1995) argues that concerns about methodological problems and the recognition of the importance of understanding more about the process which the learner was actually going through led to the development of a very different methodological approach to programme evaluation, namely illuminative evaluation (figure 2), a term coined by Parlett and Hamilton (cited in Calder, 1995, p.25). Parlett and Hamilton (cited in Calder, 1995) saw the pretest-posttest approach as a paradigm for plants, not people and consequently argued that such

evaluations are inadequate for elucidating the complex problem areas they confront. They argue that illuminative evaluation is introduced as belonging to a contrasting anthropological research paradigm. Here attempted measurement of educational products is abandoned for intensive study of the programme as a whole: its rationale and evolution, its operations, achievements, and difficulties. The innovation, they argue further, is not examined in isolation but in the learning milieu or context in which the learning takes place, very much in accordance with what Jacobs (1996) is proposing with the first stage of her model. The concern with description and interpretation rather than measurement and prediction, argues Calder (1995) reflects a substantial shift in evaluator's understanding of the potential of evaluation.

Figure 2: Illuminative evaluation

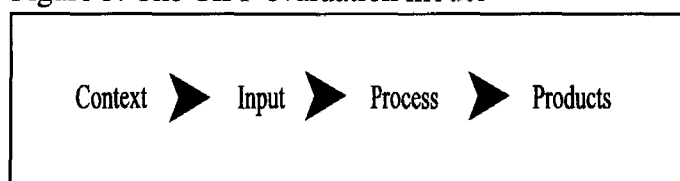


Source: Calder, 1995, p.26

Unlike illuminative evaluation, the CIPP model (figure 3) focuses on the context of a programme which Calder (1995) argues is essential for the evaluation of some projects. The CIPP model covers four evaluation stages, namely the context evaluation, input evaluation, process evaluation and product evaluation. Context evaluation provides descriptive data about the programme objectives and intended outcomes. Input evaluation focuses on the programme

strategy, process evaluation on the implementation of the programme procedures and strategies and product evaluation on the success of the programme. Product evaluation is the same as summative evaluation, where the “intention is to form a judgement or conclusion about either the absolute or the relative merits of whatever is the focus of the evaluation” (Calder, 1995, p.22)

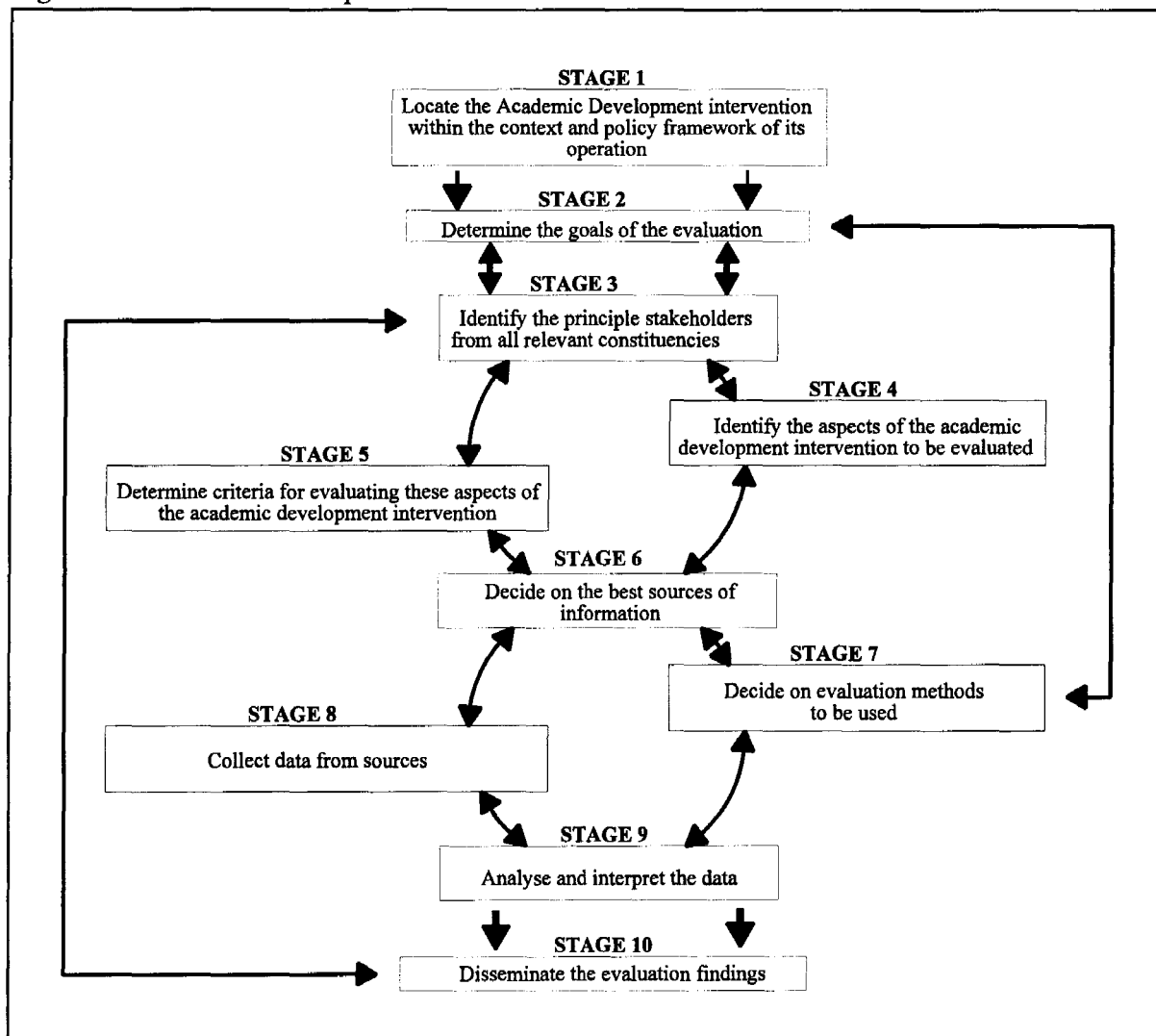
Figure 3: The CIPP evaluation model



Source: Calder, 1995, p.27

A broad overview of programme evaluation is presented above, but as Jacobs (1996, p.161) observes, “there is a dearth of evaluation models relating directly to the field of academic development”. In response to her observation, Jacobs (1996) proposes a ten stage generalised evaluation model for the evaluation of any type of academic development intervention at tertiary education institutions. The model adopts a participatory research approach and is outlined graphically in figure 4.

Figure 4: Academic development evaluation model



Source: Jacobs, 1996, p.162

Stage one of the model locates the academic intervention being evaluated within the context and policy framework of its operation. Jacobs (1996) argues that this is necessary at the outset if the complex variables impacting on academic development interventions are to be fully understood. Stage two concerns the purpose of the evaluation, of whether the purpose is summative or formative. Stage three of Jacob's (1996) model identifies the principle stakeholders from all the relevant constituencies at the institution, which may include students, staff, institutional support

services and policy-makers. Stage four identifies the aspects of the academic development intervention to be evaluated. At this stage, the decision of whether to adopt the pretest-posttest, illuminative or CIPP model can be useful in determining the aspects of the academic development intervention to evaluate. Stage five determines the criteria for evaluating the aspects of the academic development intervention. In stage six, the evaluator decides on the best sources of information for evaluating the various aspects of the intervention. At stage seven, the evaluator decides on the evaluation methods to be used. Rossi and Freeman (1985, p.90) point out that “to a considerable extent, evaluability assessment makes use of what are generally referred to as qualitative research procedures”. Such procedures are important in providing rich context-bound information (Cresswell, 1994). Jacobs (1996) points out the usefulness of triangulation, which allows the evaluator to view the object of evaluation from a number of angles, which in turn facilitates the cross-validation of data. At stage eight the evaluator collects data from the sources decided on at stage six, using the methods decided on at stage seven. Stage nine is concerned with analysing and interpreting the data and stage ten with disseminating the evaluation findings.

## **8. SUMMATION**

Cognitive development theorists, particularly Vygotsky (1978), emphasise that learning and teaching take place within relationships between people and the contexts in which they operate. Adopting this perspective influences how the challenge of academic development is viewed, highlighting limitations of the support discourse. Learning can consequently no longer be seen as the transmission of knowledge from those who have the expertise and confidence to those who do not, but rather as a participatory relationship where teachers and learners are partners in a co-

operative relationship.

Academic Development needs to be integrated into the mainstream teaching and learning activities of specific disciplines where the tutorial system is used to develop the specific academic literacy required for success within the discipline. Tutorials provide the ideal site where the social and dialectical nature of learning can be used to the benefit of developing the relevant academic literacy of students. The tutorial system however needs to be designed to provide students with the opportunity to experience literacy tasks and processes in the tutorial, where an appropriate social and dialectical learning environment is created by the tutor playing the role of mediator.

This research is concerned with an intensive study of the design and implementation of the Psychology first-year tutorial programme and utilises an adapted version of the CIPP model of evaluation as a basic evaluative framework. The next chapter focuses on outlining the methodology of the research.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **1. OVERVIEW**

Chapter two has reviewed the relevant literature, describing the nature of student learning difficulties and arguing for an integrated approach to the development of academic literacy in students. The tutorial programme of a discipline is proposed as the ideal site for the integration of the development of academic literacy into that discipline and was discussed in terms of what is required of a tutorial programme for the purpose of developing academic literacy. A ten stage generalised evaluation model (Jacobs, 1996) for the evaluation of any type of academic development intervention was also outlined. From an academic literacy point of view, after an extensive research process within the discipline of Psychology at the tertiary level, the Rhodes University Department of Psychology was able to make explicit the particular literacy required for learning in the discipline through a working definition (see Appendix 1) and the formulation of a list of skills identifying the literacy expected of students by the end of their first year of study (see Appendix 2). The Rhodes University first-year Psychology tutorial programme aimed at developing the academic literacy of students for the first time during 1997. This research is concerned with a programme evaluation of the first-year Psychology tutorial programme at Rhodes University, Grahamstown. This chapter consequently focuses on the research methodology of this evaluative research.

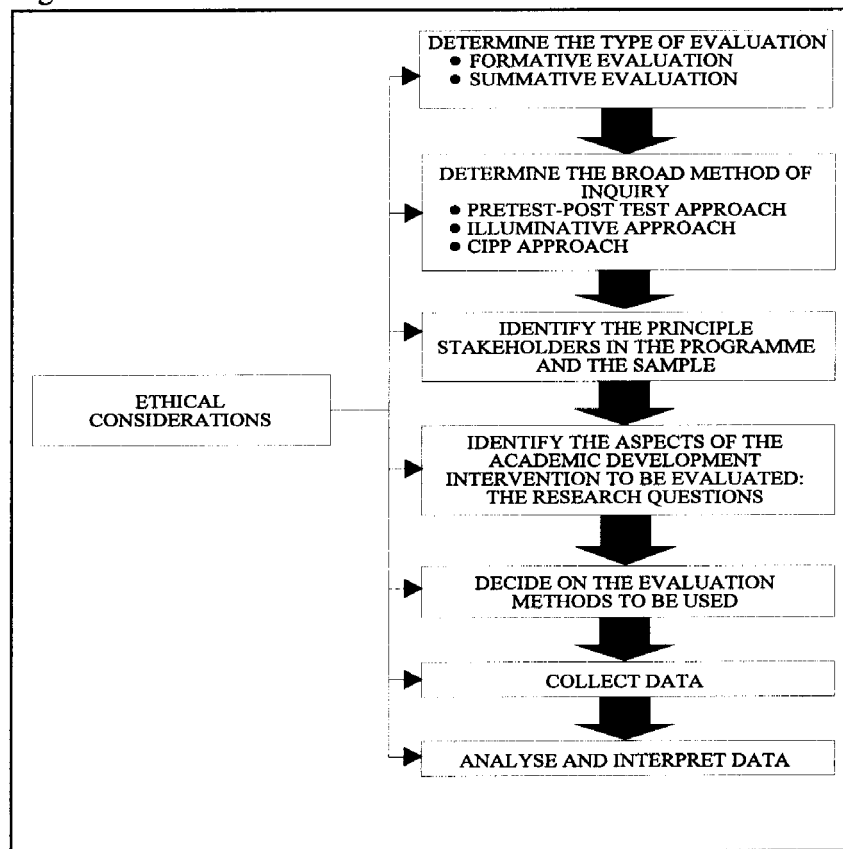
## **2. RESEARCH DESIGN**

Every research project requires a research design that is carefully tailored to the exact needs of the researcher as well as the problem. The design of this research is relatively complicated and qualitative in nature. A qualitative approach is appropriate given the nature of this research. Rossi and Freeman (1985, p.90) point out that “to a considerable extent, evaluability assessments make use of what are generally referred to as qualitative research procedures”. This is also in line with Parlett and Hamilton (cited in Calder, 1995) who, as already seen in the previous chapter, argue against a more quantitative pretest-post test approach in favour of a more qualitative approach. Van Maanen, Dabbs and Faulkner (1982) point out that qualitative refers to the essential character or nature of something, referring to meaning, the definition or analogy or model or metaphor characterising something. A qualitative approach is consequently important in providing rich context-bound information (Creswell, 1994). Quantitative on the other hand is the amount or how much. It assumes the meaning, favouring a measure of something.

## **3. RESEARCH FRAMEWORK**

The overall framework used to guide this research process was influenced by and broadly guided by the ten stage evaluation model (Jacobs, 1996) outlined in the previous chapter, where programme evaluation fits into stage two of the model. It is in stage two of the model where the goals of the evaluation are determined. The framework of this research is outline graphically in the figure below:

Figure 5: Research Framework



As seen from the figure above, the stages followed in this research include determination of the type of evaluation, determination of the broad method of evaluation, identification of the principle actors in the programme and identification of the sample, identification of research questions, deciding on data collection methods, data collection and data analysis. The dissemination of the evaluation findings is covered in the ethical considerations section of this chapter.

### 3.1 Determining the type of evaluation

Programme evaluation, as the systematic collection of information about programmes is a useful

tool to research the first-year Psychology tutorial programme. Jacobs (1997, p.164) points out that “since most academic development interventions are a response to the need for transformation, they are by nature innovative”. Jacobs (1997) consequently argues for the need to shed light on the intervention. This would be in contrast to evaluating or measuring the extent to which the intervention was successful in achieving its desired goals, favouring a formative type of evaluation.

In line with Calder (1995, p.25) who states that “there are limits within programme evaluations as to how much of the programme as a whole can or should be evaluated”, this evaluation is not concerned with evaluating whether the programme was successful in developing the academic literacy of first-year students. Since the 1997 tutorial programme was the first time the programme aimed to develop the academic literacy of first-year students, the evaluation is instead concerned with an intensive study of the rationale, design and implementation of the programme. The evaluation type relevant to this specific research then is formative or process evaluation rather than summative evaluation.

### **3.2 Method of evaluation**

As already stated, this research is not concerned with an outcome or impact evaluation (summative evaluation), but rather with the evaluation of the design and implementation of the programme: what was actually done and how it was done. This research is consequently concerned with developing an understanding of the design and implementation of the programme as a whole rather than with measurement and utilises an adapted version of the CIPP model to guide the evaluation. The original model covers four evaluation stages, namely context

evaluation, input evaluation, process evaluation and product evaluation. Context evaluation is about the programme rationale or philosophy and objectives. Input evaluation focuses on the programme procedures and strategy, process evaluation on the implementation and workings of the programme procedures and strategies and product evaluation on the success of the programme. Product evaluation is the same as summative evaluation, where the “intention is to form a judgement or conclusion about either the absolute or the relative merits of whatever is the focus of the evaluation” (Calder, 1995, p.22). As noted earlier, product evaluation is not within the scope of this research. This may be a limitation of the study in that no understanding is developed of what the programme achieved, but is clearly an opportunity for further research.

### **3.3 Development of research questions**

In deciding upon the aspect of the tutorial programme to be evaluated or the research questions, the adapted version of the CIPP approach (Parlett and Hamilton cited in Calder, 1995, p.25) was used as an overall framework to guide decision making. Using the adapted version of the CIPP model then as a broad framework and being influenced by the literature review, research questions were generated by the researcher as relevant and necessary, given the purpose of the research. These questions can be seen in the research questions column of table 1 below.

Table 1: Research questions

Programme Evaluation Stage	Research Questions
Context Evaluation	What is the philosophy underlying the first-year Psychology tutorial programme?
	What are the goals of the first-year Psychology tutorial programme?
Input Evaluation	How is the first-year Psychology tutorial programme designed?
	How are the tasks of the first-year Psychology tutorial programme designed?
Process Evaluation	How is the first-year Psychology tutorial programme implemented?
	How are the tasks of the first-year Psychology tutorial programme implemented?
	What are the attitudes of first-year Psychology students towards the tasks?
	How do students understand the tasks?
	How do first-year psychology students go about completing the tasks?
	How do the first-year Psychology tutor's run the tutorials?
	What are the attitudes of first-year Psychology tutors towards academic literacy?
	How do first-year Psychology tutors understand academic literacy?
	How do students perceive the running of the tutorials?

#### 4. SAMPLE

“Sampling is a practical way to collect data when the population is infinite or extremely large, thus making a study of all its elements impossible” (Bless & Higson-Smith, 1995, p.87)

The sample in this research is based on the assertion of Van der Riet, et al. (1996, p.12) that a range of actors in different situations share responsibility for the academic development of students as well as Potter’s (date unknown) point that the stakeholders involved in a programme understand the programme better than anyone else. Relevant data consequently needs to be collected from a range of actors, including academic staff, the programme co-ordinator, tutors who tutor at the first-year level and students.

The first-year Psychology class consists of 380 students. A purposive sample of eight students was drawn from the class, based on the grades (Fail, III, II, I) students obtained on the first assignment task completed. This meant that two students were drawn from each grade, providing a sample of students representing a broad range of marks. Given the organisational structure of the Department of Psychology, the programme is co-ordinated by one staff member. This co-ordinator of the programme was interviewed. All but one staff member responsible for the design and implementation of tasks in the first-year Psychology tutorial programme, were interviewed. In total, seven staff members were interviewed. Nine of the ten first-year Psychology tutors were included in focus group interviews. Failure to access the full staff and tutor population was due to logistic difficulties and staff resignation.

## **5. DATA COLLECTION METHODS**

As Leedy (1993, p.187) points out, “data sometimes lie buried deep within the minds or within the attitudes, feelings, or reactions of men and women”. In line with the point made by Van der Riet, et al., (1996) that academic development is the responsibility of a range of actors, data in this research consequently needs to be accessed from a range of actors.

“As with oil beneath the sea, the first problem is to devise a tool to probe below the surface” (Leedy, 1993, p.187). Filstead (cited in Chadwick, Bahr & Albrecht, 1984) notes that “researchers should use methods appropriate to the topic at hand and that complex measuring devices may become ends in themselves and therefore impediments to knowledge rather than intermediate tools which enhance understanding”. In this research, qualitative data collection procedures are used as the appropriate tools to provide rich context-bound information (Creswell, 1994) to the research questions to be answered in table 1.

### **5.1 The interview**

An interview is a specialised form of communication conducted for a specific task and has been identified as “one of the most basic forms of data gathering” (Chadwick, Bahr & Albrecht, 1984, p.103). Authors (Chadwick et al., 1984; May, 1993; Bless & Higson-Smith, 1995) generally agree that an interview is a data collection method of entering and maintaining conversations with people for the purpose of obtaining research-relevant information. May (1993, p.91) points out that interviews yield “rich sources of data on people’s experiences, opinions, aspirations and feelings”. Commenting on the strength of interviews, Seidman (1991) points out that it is through

interviews that “we can come to understand the details of people’s experience from their point of view” and of “the issues, structures, processes, and policies that imbue participant’s stories”.

In this research, short semi-structured interviews lasting an average of twenty minutes each with students and thirty minutes with staff were used for the specific purpose of obtaining rich research relevant information. It was felt that interviews would provide the rich qualitative data being sought, given the qualitative nature of the research. Questionnaires on the other hand, were not used. Questionnaires are a totally impersonal probe (Leedy, 1993) while interviews involve direct personal contact (Bless & Higson-Smith, 1995) and offer an opportunity for the researcher to gather the rich qualitative data sought.

Interview questions were generated on the basis of the research questions and were included in a schedule which served as the agenda for the interviews (the schedules for students, the coordinator and staff interviews can be seen in Appendices 4-6 respectively). The interviews were each recorded on audio tape with the consent of the participants.

## **5.2 Focus group interviews**

A focus group is a valuable tool for collecting qualitative data. It is a carefully planned discussion group which provides a means for collecting qualitative data on a defined area of interest in a permissive, non-threatening environment (Krueger, 1988; Bless & Higson-Smith, 1995; Visser, 1996). It is used in settings and situations where a one-shot collection is necessary (Berg, 1995) to provide insights into the attitudes, perceptions and opinions of participants. The focus group presents a more natural environment than that of an individual interview because

participants are influencing and influenced by others. Krueger (1988) points out that group members interact with and influence one another by responding to ideas and comments during the discussion. Morgan (1988, p.18) argues that this interaction is a major advantage since “the participants’ interaction among themselves replaces their interaction with the interviewer, leading to a greater emphasis on participants’ points of view”.

In this research, two focus groups consisting of four and five tutors respectively were used to gather information about tutors’ understanding of and attitudes towards academic literacy, how they run their tutorials and any problems encountered. Guiding questions were generated to elicit relevant information to answer the research questions already identified. The questions formed an interview schedule (Appendix 7) which was used and discussions were relatively unstructured. The focus group discussions were recorded on audio tape.

### **5.3 Observation**

For Nachmias and Nachmias (1990, p.153), modern social science is rooted in observation and a number of authors (Chadwick et al., 1984; Silverman, 1993) list observational methods as one of the general forms of data collection. Robson (1993, p.190) points out that "as the actions and behaviour of people are a central aspect in virtually any enquiry, a natural and obvious technique is to watch what they do, to record this in some way and then to describe, analyse and interpret what we have observed".

During the second semester, each of the four tutor briefing sessions and the three tutorials held on Monday afternoons were observed by the researcher to gather secondary data about the

tutorial and briefing sessions. With respect to both the tutorial and the briefing sessions, the observations were unstructured. The researcher focussed on space, objects, actors, activity, event, time and goal. Regarding briefing sessions, information was gathered about how tutors are inducted into the tasks by staff during briefing sessions as well as about the context created in the tutorial and the implementation of the programme as a whole by tutors. Written notes were made during the meetings and tutorials.

#### **5.4 Documentary research**

Jacobs (1996) notes that documentation relating to the various aspects of an academic development intervention, is an important source of information. It is also a source of triangulation. In this research, the researcher located and used various documents as a source of data, including the Department of Psychology Academic Development Policy (Appendix 1), the Psychology I course outline (Appendix 3) and the document listing the skills to be developed at each year (Appendix 2).

### **6. DATA ANALYSIS**

With respect to qualitative data analysis, Coffey and Atkinson (1996) note that there are many ways to analyse qualitative data and caution that the search for one perfect method is fruitless. Similarly, Creswell (1994, p.153) points out that “the process of data analysis is eclectic; there is no right way” but that “data analysis requires that the researcher be comfortable with developing categories and making comparisons and contrasts”. However, a central concern with transforming and interpreting qualitative data is that it is done in a rigorous and scholarly way

(Coffey and Atkinson, 1996).

### **6.1 Immersion in the data**

Mostyn (cited in Brenner, Brown & Canter, 1985) points out that the qualitative researcher must immerse himself in the research data, read it in note or transcript form, or listen to it if it is on tape. This total immersion is essential and the researcher must embrace all the material in order to pick up even the most subtle of clues to get a feel for what is really going on (ibid). Seidman (1991) similarly argue that there is no substitute for this total immersion in the data.

The researcher immersed himself in the data by reading the transcribed notes and by listening to all the tape recordings of each interview. The recordings were first listened to and then all the transcribed notes were read to obtain a general feeling for the data. Then the transcribed notes relevant to each set of actors were read and then again while listening to the relevant tapes. This was done for each set of actors, namely students, staff, the co-ordinator and tutors. No particular planned sequence was followed during this stage, but the researcher found that he first focussed on the student interviews, then the co-ordinator's interviews, then the staff interviews and then the tutor's interviews.

### **6.2 Making sense of the data**

An enormous amount of text was generated by the interviews and focus group interviews. Since it is not possible for the final report to play back all the recorded observations, the researcher must think in terms of condensing, excising, and even interpreting the data, so that it can be

written up as a meaningful communication (Mostyn cited in Brenner et al., 1985).

Seidman (1991) points out that the first step in reducing text data is to read it and mark the passages that are interesting. Similarly, Miles and Huberman (1984) note that the vast array of words, sentences, paragraphs, and pages have to be reduced to what is of most importance and interest.

In first approaching the text for the purpose of reducing it, Seidman (1991) argues that the researcher must come to the transcripts with an open attitude prepared to let the interview breathe and speak for itself, seeking what emerges as important and of interest from the text. Rowan (1981), however does point out that at the same time, no researcher can enter into the study of text as a clean slate. All responses to a text are interactions between the text and the researcher (Fish, 1980). That is why it is important argues Seidman (1991), that the researcher identify his interest in the subject. Seidman (ibid) makes reference to Marshall, who acknowledges that what she can bring to the data is her sense of what is important as she read the transcripts. It is important argues Seidman (1991, p.90) that “the researcher acknowledges that in this stage of the process he or she is exercising judgement about what is significant in the transcript. There is no model matrix of interesting categories that one can impose on all texts as what is essential and interesting is embedded in each research topic and will arise out of each interview transcript (Seidman, 1991). In this research, the researcher’s judgement as to what was significant in the transcripts was guided by the research questions.

In marking certain passages, it is important to articulate criteria for marking the passages as important (Seidman, 1991). This, Seidman (ibid) points out is important in order for the process

to have public credibility. With respect to this research, the researcher used the research questions listed in table 1 as criteria for marking passages as important. Seidman (1991) also points out that one does not begin to read the transcripts with a set of categories for which one wants to find excerpts. The categories, the above author note further, arise out of the passages that have been marked as interesting, but on the other hand, on reflection on the types of material marked as interesting, it will be clear that some patterns are present, that the researcher has certain predispositions that he brings with him to his reading of the transcripts.

During the process of reading and marking the transcripts, Seidman (1991) notes that the researcher can begin to label the passages that he has marked as interesting, using a word or phrase that seems to describe the passage, at least tentatively. The categories need to be tentative as some will fold into each other, some will die out while other new categories may appear. Coded sets of data were transferred into a new data file using the “tile side by side” and the “copy and paste” function. The researcher kept the original data file intact so that it could remain as the original source of data to be referred to. In line with Seidman’s (1991) advice, the excerpts in the “new” file were read for patterns and connections among the excerpts within the categories and for connections between the various categories. This, Seidman (1991) refers to as themes.

For Seidman (1991, p.101), “interpreting and analysing are not processes the researcher does only near the end of the project”. Marking passages that are of interest, labelling them, and grouping them is interpretative and analytical work argues Seidman (1991). Mostyn, with reference to Berelson, (cited in Brenner et al., 1985, p.139) points out that “the richness of qualitative analysis resides not in the content categories with which they deal but rather with the interpretation which they make of the content material”. In commenting on how one goes about

interpreting data, Mostyn (cited in Brenner, Brown & Canter, 1985) notes that it is the ability to see new relationships by allowing one's creative powers enough free reign to turn an idea around, perhaps even upside down. There is no easy formula, argues Mostyn, to aid the researcher in the interpretation of qualitative data as opposed to merely reporting the findings. To be able to interpret does, however, argues Mostyn (cited in Brenner et al., 1985), "require several qualities and abilities from the researcher, among the most essential, to stand back from the problem to gain a new perspective; work with contradictions; explore new relationships, turn the problem around, perhaps even upside down; understand basic motivations and apply them; see behind rationalisations; ask and try to answer the question, what is the meaning of this?". This, argues Coffey and Atkinson (1996, p.9) "is where the researcher attempts to offer his own interpretation of what is going on". Wolcott (cited in Coffey & Atkinson, 1996, p.9) argues that interpretation is where the "researcher transcends factual data and cautious analysis and begins to probe into what is to be made of them".

With regards to presenting the findings of qualitative research, Miles and Huberman (1984) argue that the goal of marking what is of interest in the interview transcripts is to reduce and then shape the material into a form in which it can be shared or displayed. This is important, especially in light of Mostyn's (cited in Brenner et al., 1985, p.141) point that "the researcher must bear in mind that the final research report must be clear to readers who have not had the benefit of being present at the interviews or reading through the raw material". Mostyn (ibid) points out that "while writing the report, it is important to bear in mind the purpose of quotations; they provide not only the proof that the data produced the concepts the researcher is reporting, but also they preserve the language of the respondents".

### **6.3 Analysis of documentary data**

Documentation relevant to the first year Psychology course and the first-year tutorial programme was read and analysed for themes relevant to the research questions listed in table 1. Some of the themes identified served to support themes identified in the transcripts while others were new.

## **7. VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY**

The nature of qualitative research presents the possibility that other researchers would have gathered, analysed and interpreted the data differently (Fay, 1987). Considerations of issues of validity and reliability though can address this possibility.

Hammersley (1990, p.57) explains validity as the “extent to which an account accurately represents the social phenomena to which it refers”. With respect to validity, Johns (cited in Horowitz, 1986, p.448) cautions that “the use of a questionnaire or interview leaves open the question of whether the data reflect what the respondents do, what they think they do, or what they want the researcher to think they do”. As Caldwell (1997, p.66) argues, “there can therefore be no guarantee that the practices and priorities claimed by lecturers (or students) in their responses reflect actual performance”. Both the data and their interpretation, argues Caldwell (*ibid*) should “therefore be read with caution, and be seen to reflect only one version of what selected community members think and do about academic literacy in their discipline”.

Consistent with these concerns, this research sought to provide some verification of the qualitative nature of the interview method. The observation method was considered viable.

Parlett and Hamilton (cited in Calder, 1995) argue that no method should be used exclusively or in isolation but rather that different methods be combined to throw light on a common problem. This use of triangulation argues Jacobs (1997, p.167), “allows the evaluator to view the object of evaluation from a number of angles, which in turn facilitates the cross-validation of data”. Cohen and Manion (1980, p.260-270) endorse this view. For them, the researcher’s picture of the particular slice of reality being investigated may be biased or distorted by exclusive reliance on one method. Consequently, the more the methods contrast with each other, the greater the researcher’s confidence in the research results (Cohen and Manion, 1980).

In addition to triangulation, Silverman (1995) identifies respondent validation as a form of validation where the findings are taken back to the subjects for them to verify the findings. Jacobs (1996) similarly argues that returning to the stakeholders is important as it seeks to generate debate around the academic development intervention and create shared understandings, validating the findings with the sources of information.

With respect to the reliability of this qualitative study, it is important to note that it can be argued that a concern for the reliability arises only within the quantitative research tradition (Silverman, 1995). As pointed out by Silverman (1995, p.146), “once we treat social reality as always in flux, then it makes no sense to worry about whether our research instruments measure accurately”. Kirk and Millar (1986, p.72) however argue that:

Qualitative researchers can no longer afford to beg the issue of reliability. While the forte of field research will always lie in its capability to sort out validity of propositions, its results will (reasonably) go ignored minus attention to reliability.

For reliability to be calculated it is incumbent on the scientific investigator to document his or her procedure.

In an attempt to address the reliability of the study, the research procedure of this research has been clearly documented. Also, reliability can also be addressed by using standardised methods to gather data. With regards this research, standard interview schedules were used and are documented (Appendices 4 to 7).

## **8. RESEARCH LIMITATIONS**

The model for evaluating academic development interventions (Jacobs, 1996) was used as a broad framework to guide this research and although the model advocates a participatory research approach, such an approach was not used in this research. This could impact upon the Department of Psychology accepting and be willing to use the findings of the research in developing the first year tutorial programme. The researcher neglected to, after an initial interpretation of the findings, to “return to as many stakeholders as possible to negotiate the findings” (Jacobs, 1996, p.169). Jacobs (1996) argues that returning to the stakeholders is important as it seeks to generate debate around the academic development intervention and create shared understandings, validating the findings with the sources of information. Silverman (1995), similarly argues for respondent validation where the findings are taken back to the subjects for them to verify the findings. In this regard, the research is limited in the sense that the findings were not taken back to the subjects for verification. Stake (cited in Jacobs, 1996) argues that negotiating drafts with key actors is more than a courtesy, it becomes essential to completeness. It can also be important for the credibility of the evaluation (Jacobs, 1996) and

in generating a willingness among stakeholders to use the findings in developing the programme which was evaluated. As an alternative to not having returned to the stakeholders, Jacobs (1996) suggests a public forum as an option for presenting the findings to staff of the Department of Psychology, as opposed to a lengthy report or a presentation. Such a forum provides a opportunity for the asking of questions and the generation of discussion.

## **9. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

Since the research was concerned with human subjects, the question of ethical standards needed to be addressed. Leedy (1993, p.128) notes that “the ethics involved in the use of human subjects in research should not go without careful scrutiny”.

The results of the subject could cause embarrassment to the Psychology Department and especially to those staff members responsible for and involved in the programme as they expose the design and implementation of the first-year psychology tutorial programme. The findings are presented in the form of a final report made available in the Rhodes University Library for public reading and scrutiny. On the other hand, the results and recommendations can result in improvements in the programme in future years. It can be argued that the potential benefits of the project would justify the potential minor embarrassment of the results to the Department or the staff involved. The nature and aim of the project however is not to place blame on any particular party, nor to identify (name) any specific individual involved in the programme. Although participant’s names were made known to the researcher, they do not appear in this research thesis. Consistent with the advice of Bless and Higson-Smith (1995), anonymity was guaranteed to participants during the introduction of each interview and at the end of the

interview. Interviews were recorded on audio tape but verbal permission was obtained from each participant to record the interview on audio tape before the interview commenced. Written permission was obtained to conduct the project from the Head of the Psychology Department. The right of each participant to refuse to participate was respected. Each participant was verbally informed of the voluntary nature of participating and was also verbally informed of the project and potential benefits. As observation was used as a data collection method, participants were verbally informed as to the fact that the researcher was viewing them and when this would take place. The research report will be made accessible to all who participated in the research through the Rhodes University library.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **RESEARCH FINDINGS**

#### **1. OVERVIEW**

The aim of this chapter is to provide a systematic account of the results of the data collected from the various sources. To assist in the presentation of the findings and to add to the richness of the findings, direct quotations are used and data gathered from observations of tutorials and tutor briefing sessions is included where relevant. In using quotations, the anonymity of individuals is protected consistent with the ethical considerations of this study. As there is only one first-year tutorial programme co-ordinator within the Department of Psychology, it is important in a study of this nature that his anonymity is also protected. No quotation will consequently be identified as that of the co-ordinator. This would have been a limiting factor in this research, had the perspective of the co-ordinator been any different from that of the academic staff interviewed. Individual tutor statements are not identified as the focus group technique was used to gather data from the group of tutors.

#### **2. PROGRAMME CONTEXT**

##### **2.1 Academic development departmental philosophy**

The Department of Psychology has an academic development policy which outlines its philosophy regarding academic development within the discipline of psychology. This philosophy points to the Department's aim to develop the academic, professional and vocational

literacy of all students. These three types of literacy are identified within this academic development policy. See Appendix 1.

## **2.2 An integrated approach to academic development**

The academic development philosophy of the department of psychology is one of an integrated approach to the development of all first-year students, where academic development is seen as an integral part of teaching students. It is recognised that academic development should not be seen as an add-on or something for disadvantaged students, but for all first-year students. No specific group of students is targeted as disadvantaged, requiring academic support within the discipline in order to cope academically. It is however, recognised that some students may need academic support but that this support should be seen as separate from the pursuit of academic development which is integrated into teaching and learning processes within the discipline.

## **2.3 Development of academic literacy**

Academic literacy is seen to be a part of the development of all students, not only the so-called disadvantaged students. Within the psychology Department, academic literacy is defined as:

“The set of competencies required to think critically, ask questions, communicate and access relevant resources within the discipline of psychology at the tertiary education level. Among these competencies are: the abilities to read complex texts, to communicate through writing, to attend and participate in lectures, to access and use resources including the library, computers and staff and peers, and

to write examinations”.

It is these competencies which the tutorial programme aims to address. The definition of academic literacy is an attempt to formulate what is meant by academic literacy in order that academic development may be envisaged and integrated into teaching within the discipline of psychology.

#### **2.4 An incremental approach to the development of academic literacy**

Academic development within the department of psychology is seen to occur within each year of study. The philosophy recognises the need for an incremental approach to academic development. For each year, there is a list of pre determined skills which the department aims to develop. This list outlines the skills to be developed in students during the different progressive levels within the department of Psychology and is included in Appendix 2. This highlights the philosophy of an incremental approach to academic development. Not only is the idea to develop students incrementally over the different levels (years) within the discipline but also through developing students incrementally within each year. As a respondent points out:

“What we tried to develop throughout the year was I think was an incremental approach to what initially was the first tutorial they had some kind of access information in the library and that’s what they’ll need throughout the whole year, next one, they look at a bit of essay writing, understanding argument, um, there were two essay writing ones”.

## 2.5 Pre-determined skills to be developed

The department of Psychology aims at developing academic literacy in all students through the development of specific skills. The definition of academic literacy serves as the basis for the formulation of the academic skills to be developed. These lists are intended to guide teaching and learning processes within the discipline. The list identifies three broad areas of skills, namely reading skills, writing skills and general skills. At the first-year level, the tutorial programme aims at developing these skills amongst the first-year students:

### Reading:

- to become familiar with accessing information in the library
- to be able to read and interpret basic texts

### Writing:

- be able to understand the tasks inherent in assignment and test questions (relevance of information, understand directive of question - discuss, outline, contrast)
- be able to structure an essay (intro, body, conclusion)
- be able to offer a logical argument (sequence of thoughts in body of essay, differentiate different voices in text - that there are differing opinions, that own voice is different), coherence of argument
- be familiar with APA requirements

General:

- being aware of how psychology is different from other subjects
- being aware of the resources within the department (lecturers, tutors, peers, SI, video library) and building confidence with using them
- realising the importance of being interactive/participative in a variety of settings (lectures, tutorials, informal interactions) and taking responsibility for being active
- being able to manage being evaluated under examination conditions (studying for exams/tests as well as writing under these conditions)
- being able to respond effectively to feedback in its various forms (lecturers, tutors, peers, SI).

The skills to be developed at each year are recorded on a list or what respondents referred to as a template of these skills as can be seen above.

## **2.6 Creation of a learning environment**

There is a need to create a learning environment where students can develop academic literacy. This environment refers to an overall departmental environment where all stakeholders (staff and students) are aware of the underlying need to develop academic literacy and actively work towards the creation and structuring of opportunities to foster the development of academic literacy.

## **2.7 Students need to understand the nature of Psychology as a discipline**

The programme wants to encourage students to realise the ill-structured nature of typical problems within the discipline of psychology, that there are different theories in Psychology and that there is a psychological discourse or a psychological way of being and thinking. This is brought out by a respondent in the quotation below:

“There isn’t one right answer ... that there’s one correct way and there’s one text that we have to look at and if we learn that text off by heart and then we’ll be alright then there’s no need to consult alternative texts ... there isn’t uh a need to always to return to the text to find out what’s happening”.

## **2.8 Students need to live the subject of psychology**

Students need to internalise the discipline of Psychology. They need to think about psychology, be affected by the discipline, communicate about the discipline, enjoy the discipline and, in effect, live or become part of the discipline:

“To make it more lived, to make it something that affects them and they can speak about and share ideas”.

“There isn’t one right answer ... that there’s one correct way and there’s one text that we have to look at and if we learn that text off by heart and then we’ll be alright then there’s no need to consult alternative texts ... there isn’t uh a need to always to return to the text

to find out what's happening" Um, ... the aim of the tutorial programme is to get students to start thinking about psychological issues in a more personal manner, to teach them certain skills like essay writing, understanding arguments, reading through texts and to understand what's being said and to feed it back, um to get them to enjoy Psychology I, to make it more lived, to make it something that affects them and they can speak about and share ideas with, um to give them space and time to explore ideas that they don't have time to explore in lectures because the lecturer is trying to get through content, getting them to understand that they need to like explore more and this is the space for them to do it, um to get them to participate and engage in psychology in a more constructive meaningful manner instead of just sitting down and taking notes um to speak about, to live Psychology. ... to make Psychology I fun, um make it interesting, to make it more alive, to hear other people's viewpoints, ... to provide space".

### **3. INPUT EVALUATION**

#### **3.1 Need for a Departmental strategy**

It is evident from the Academic Development Policy that the Department of Psychology identifies the need for a Departmental strategy to provide direction for the optimisation of academic development within the department. But there is no concrete strategy as such.

#### **3.2 Adherence to academic development policy**

An Academic Development committee has been set up to assume responsibility for reflecting

on and motivating for adherence to the principles identified in the Academic Development policy.

### **3.3 Tutorials as the site for development**

There is a need for the Psychology I course to provide a space and time other than lectures for students to develop academic literacy:

“The lecturer is trying to get through content, getting them (students) to understand that they need to like explore more and this is the space for them to do it, um to get them to participate and engage in psychology in a more constructive meaningful manner instead of just sitting down and taking notes um to speak about, to live Psychology. ... to make Psychology I fun, um make it interesting, to make it more alive, to hear other people’s viewpoints, ... to provide space”.

At the first year level, the tutorial programme is the primary site for the academic development of students. The tutorial programme aims to provide students with an opportunity (the space and time) to explore ideas and to get students to be active participatory learners within the discipline. The programme needs to provide “a space for students to participate and think about Psychology, a particular structure, a set of exercises that allows for development”. It is through the tutorial programme that academic development is integrated into the teaching and learning processes within the discipline. A respondent indicates that the tutorial:

“Gets students together and gets them to speak about psychological related issues, it provides a structure, it provides a frame in which they are required to participate, they have to come to each tutorial, they have to complete tutorial tasks, so they come with particular whatever it might be, bring the actual worksheet with some of their ideas and we haven’t just chosen any particular topic”.

The tutorials take place weekly and last for forty five minutes each. Students must attend one of the three scheduled meetings to which they are allocated at the beginning of the year.

### **3.4 Logistic details of tutorials**

Tutorials take place in the Psychology Department in various small tutorial rooms both upstairs and downstairs in the building. From observing the tutorials it is evident that the venues are generally spacious, carpeted with white walls (some covered with sound proofing) and with at least one window. Most of the tutorial rooms have mattresses on the floor, adding an informal atmosphere. These mattresses are normally arranged in a “U” shape and students sit on these in close proximity to each other, facing the tutor. One venue has chairs while another has chairs and a table around which students sit. Other than the objects already in the venue (mattresses, tables, chairs) students carry their own possessions with them (bag, notes which are usually the worksheet/s provided by the lecturer to be prepared for the tutorial, pens, books, folders) into the room. Most of the venues do not have teaching aids such as a flipchart, a whiteboard, an overhead projector or screen. Where teaching aids were available, they were not used during the observation period.

### **3.5 The role of staff**

Individual staff members who lecture the different courses at the first year level are responsible for the design of a tutorial task. They also need to meet with tutors and brief them with respect to the task.

In the Academic Development Policy, the important role of staff in the success of academic development is recognised. As a result of the academic development initiative, it is recognised that staff will have to deal with changing teaching requirements and that they would require development in the area of developing the academic literacy of students.

### **3.6 The role of tutors**

Tutors within the Department of Psychology facilitate all the first-year tutorial sessions.

The important role of good tutors is recognised by the academic staff, as is the importance of staff-tutor communication, where tutors are briefed or signposted on what to do in the tutorial.

Tutors also identify their role as important, understanding their role as facilitators of the learning process. For them there is a relationship between themselves and the students where ideally the students should learn from them, where they develop students' confidence so that they do not just splurge out theory as in Psychology there is no right or wrong answer. Tutors also feel that they need to make explicit what is required of students, especially in terms of essays. Further, tutors play a feedback role, especially in terms of providing written feedback to assignments as

well as within the tutorial. Tutors generally recognise their role as mediators in the tutorial process:

“The first years come out of school with authority figures as the head and at university it is definitely one of the things we must learn to be able to communicate with those authority figures one on one and I think the tutors are the primary source of that at the beginning”.

Although tutors feel that they have an important role to play, they feel that it is not always acknowledged by the department, by students or even by the tutors themselves.

#### **4. PROCESS EVALUATION**

##### **4.1 Difficulty implementing philosophy**

Although there exists an underlying academic development philosophy, this philosophy is implicit, with problems of implementing it. The philosophy underlying the development of academic literacy remains at the philosophical level with a definite implementation strategy lacking. As indicated by one of the respondents:

“There is an AD philosophy which is underlying it but sometimes I think it’s more implicit and sometimes I think it’s quite hard to make a connection between the AD issues and how they affect the programme and how they influence the programme. Once again it’s like the difference between a Mission statement and what the person does ...

operating is different, it's a different story".

#### **4.2 Academic literacy skills to be developed are implicit**

Respondents felt that it was important in the implementation of the programme to make the academic literacy skills which are to be developed explicit, not only to students but in particular to tutors who are to facilitate the learning process. In reality though, academic literacy skills were not made explicit:

“Tutors weren’t signposted on how to look and try and delve and get these things (AD skills) up properly ... I think that’s part of our problem”

The need for a booklet was highlighted which identifies and outlines the tutorial programme:

“A package, you get a course, you get a tut and you get those handouts at the start of the year, this is it um and the AD issues are going to be made more explicit”.

The academic literacy aspect of tasks are generally implicit to the students interviewed. In the interview, students were first asked about the purpose of the task they had chosen as the most interesting. The general response from the students was varied, but no student explicitly identified the purpose of tasks as being the development of academic skills. The quotations below are from each of the seven students interviewed:

“To extend what we know and not just merely what was given to us”.

“It was just taking an aspect of the course and expanding upon it”.

“I don’t think it had any special purpose ...”.

“To make the actors think within a certain perspective. For example to think as a lawyer”.

“To try and broaden our horizons”.

“I suppose the video that was presented to us put it all together”.

“Reporting back what you have seen (video), but in a more sensible way”.

“I think it generally for us to assess ourselves and not others so we could like basically get to know our own personality and get in touch with our unconscious and sometimes we don’t even know our own conscious levels”.

#### **4.3 Lack of a tactical plan**

Staff indicated that there was no overall plan or guide as to what skills they should be aiming to develop. They felt isolated in the sense that they were uncertain as to what skills students had already developed and what they should consequently be developing. One member referred to past relevant tutorial tasks to gain an idea of how to set the task.

#### **4.4 Skills staff wanted to develop through their tasks**

Three of the teaching staff identified critical thinking as the skill they attempted to develop through the task they designed. Different staff members identified a range of different skills they intended developing through the specific task they designed. These skills include library skills, synthesising and evaluating information, reading skills, critical thinking, application of theory, communicate about the discipline, engage in the discipline, referencing, writing skills and to live the discipline. Of the skills identified above, four staff members aimed to develop the students' skill in the application of theory while three attempted to develop critical thinking.

It is not clear whether staff each have a copy of Appendix 2 which lists the academic literacy skills to be developed or whether they have access to this list, but there is a lack of a clear fit between the skills staff identify and those identified in Appendix 2.

#### **4.5 Lack of continuity**

A lack of continuity within the programme with respect to the academic development of students was evident from the comments of lecturers, students and tutors.

Staff require a strategy that provides a clear idea of the academic literacy skills they need to develop in their particular course:

“And also there's no, I mean it's not as though the beginning of the year we had a discussion - you'll do this, I'll do that, you know, so on and so forth, it was just

you know I did it but it just felt like I was doing it, I wasn't part of a group of people who were working together on the Psycho I tutorial programme to make you know develop student skills. It's hard to say how my tutorial kind of in itself begins to answer those questions of the skills we're trying to develop because I think the tutorial programme as a whole should build in the other and I don't know if it does that, it's a bit disjointed. I don't think it's up to the individual, I think it's a departmental responsibility as well and what I mean by that is ja, it is the individual but we need to get together ... talk about what we're doing you know, I found that a lot of the time I was working independently on my own and I had no sort of sense of how I needed to place things, at what level I needed to pitch things for the students in terms of where I was at in the year, and what other people were planning".

Staff need to understand where they fit into the overall development of academic literacy skills and be able to make the relevant contribution to the overall development of academic literacy.

This was lacking in the programme:

"There wasn't a golden thread that ran through the Psycho I programme, you see they (lecturers) had some idea it would be incremental but once it actually got going there wasn't enough thought going into it. This is what I want you (lecturers) to try and learn, I want you to develop uh understanding argument, I want you to kind of develop certain research skill".

They have an idea of some of the skills students need to develop by the end of their first year,

but there is a lack of a commonly shared understanding of all the skills to be developed which is in line with the pre-determined list of skills. This is evident from the exact skills each staff member aimed to develop in the particular course they were responsible for. The skills staff aimed to develop followed no logical structure from the first course in the year to the last course:

“I think one of the problems is the amount of time and effort going into try and incorporate those skills more explicitly ... it’s a bit disjointed because each lecturer is doing different things um, I don’t really know what kind of skills they have already developed throughout the year because it’s not done with the overall approach, there isn’t a thread running through it”.

In considering changes for the following year, there was a sense of a more coherent approach:

“Next year ... get all the lecturers together and say that this is what we want to do and have some idea of or direction of the tutorial programme, where we want to go with this, what we want to do about it and lecturers must have some idea of where they fit in, so I want to do this because this is where you’re teaching, so at the end of the year, the students should have these particular skills and I want you to build on the earlier skills”.

“There’s going to be greater coherence and linkage between what happens in the course and what happens in the tut ... there’s going to be greater link of understanding between lecturers, um we’re going to have meetings, start the year where all Psycho I lecturers come: this is what we want to do, this is where we

want to go, these are the steps that we want to work with in the process of getting students to a particular point where they should be able to develop the academic literacy skills. Um, booklets provided, the dates made more available at the start of the year so that's no confusion about when the tuts are".

"Lecturers should get together at the beginning of the year, say this is the course, this is the syllabus for the first years OK, which courses are we going to focus on and they should like liaise with each other. There should be a plan beforehand of the whole year and see what's coming. Lectures aren't talking to each other and having some kind of link and almost like a flow between different tuts".

Tutors also experienced the lack of continuity. They suggest that at the beginning of the year, students need to be taken through the programme and told what it is all about and what they can expect. The students need to get a whole package so they know when the tuts are. The first two tuts need to be used to explain tutorial programme aims. The tutors also need to receive a booklet including all the relevant information.

#### **4.6 Development of academic literacy as a by-product of task design**

As a result of the lack of continuity, staff members designed tasks merely for the sake of designing a task. The tasks were not designed as part of a broader pre-determined programme design. The result was that the implementation of the programme did not always result in the desired process:

“It was just ... you know getting something together for next week”.

Although staff acknowledge and identify some of the academic literacy skills to be developed, these skills did not play a central or primary role in the thinking behind the design of the task. The skills were not taken into account seriously in the design of the task. This is evident from the different staff quotations below:

“I did it more with the task in mind than the skills in mind”.

“I don’t know how seriously the whole academic development thing is considered by lecturers when they put the questions together”.

“The level of thought which went into designing this tutorial was more ad hoc, more what do I do with these students? I’ve got to get something out, what am I going to do for 45 minutes? Just knock out a worksheet um and I think most of the tutorial were basically worksheets around getting students to speak about psychology and speak to different, hear different viewpoints. Academic literacy, if it happened, it happened as a by-product. It was more implicit - that wasn’t something that I thought out, it was not that I said these are the type of academic development skills I want to develop, uh what should I do in my tut to try and access these”.

“Mm. The task is communicated, ja, but not necessarily the rationale behind it, but I did mention to the tutors what I was aiming at with that one particular

question was that they must try and come up with the idea that you know theories can be useful in conjunction with other theories and so on, but no, it was not explicit to the students, but the tutors were expected to try and draw that out in the tut group”.

Tasks are not designed consciously to achieve certain academic literacy skills. Tasks are designed with the course content in mind, where the staff member asks what the student needs to be able to do and then designs a task which usually consists of questions to be answered that requires the student to engage in certain processes, such as accessing information in the library, accessing information in their textbook, extrapolating relevant information, thinking about the information and determining an answer of their own. Indications that staff do consider the processes they want students to go through is evident from the comments below:

“I think for people who ... basically took the tutorial seriously, I would say that those goals would have been achieved, but again it would depend on whether the debate was stimulated in the tutorials because the tutor had a role to play”.

“All the tutorial exercises I mean, I think the one thing about them ... they were more implicit, the success was more a by-product ... it might have happened anyway ... we didn't say this is what students should learn so therefore exercise it, it was the other way around, here's the exercise, lets see what happens”.

#### **4.7 Disorganisation of tutorial programme**

On two occasions, on walking into a tutorial the students were sitting around talking to each other. There was no tutor. When the tutor still had not arrived after ten minutes, the students got up and left, joking about there being no tutor.

Tutors feel that the concept of a tutorial programme is a good concept, but the way in which the tutorial programme was run during 1997 didn't necessarily facilitate the academic growth of students. The disorganisation on the part of the lecturers and poor management of the programme contributed to the programme neglecting to facilitate growth and not the actual tutorial process itself. Tutors point to the tutorial programme as being poorly organised ("terribly disorganised"), with students and tutors not being clear as to when tutorials were taking place. There is no handout with all relevant information such as dates and due dates. In some cases, students didn't have enough time to prepare for the tutorials.

#### **4.8 Ad-hoc briefing sessions**

Tutors identify a problem with the briefing they receive from the lecturers. The tutors pointed out that in some cases lecturers didn't arrive for briefing meetings, neither did some tutors. This neglect of tutors to arrive for briefing sessions is confirmed by the researcher's observations of the briefing sessions, where the full compliment of tutors was rarely available to be briefed by staff. Tutors feel that there is a general lack of commitment on the part of both lecturers and tutors.

They point out that to meet at 12:00 and have the tut at 14:00 the same afternoon is a problem. Briefing sessions usually took place in the Psychology Department, but on one occasion it was observed that the briefing session took place on the steps entering the main door of the Department. There was no fixed day or time for these briefing sessions. The briefing meetings took place Thursdays, Fridays and Mondays, including Monday lunch time. Meetings were generally short. Some were only approximately 10 minutes. The full 45 minute period was not used in the briefing sessions observed by the researcher.

#### **4.9 Briefing sessions neglect to prepare tutors adequately**

Tutors feel they don't have the sense of confidence they feel is necessary for tutorials as there is not enough time to read up and prepare adequately for the tutorials. This is because briefing sessions take place the same day as the tutorial. They feel that they finish tutorials early because they are not adequately prepared.

Tutors feel that lecturers assume they know everything in the Psychology I syllabus, which they feel is not always the case and express a need for an opportunity in the briefing session to clarify misunderstandings or to get to know what is required from a content point of view. The tutors expect a participatory approach in the briefing sessions where they can ask questions and gain the necessary knowledge.

#### **4.10 The process of the briefing session**

With respect to the briefing sessions, it was observed that the staff member walks into the venue

with the relevant materials which usually includes student worksheets and hands out the worksheets. Most tutors are already in the venue when the staff member enters. Some lecturers provided a broad overview of what (content) they had covered in lectures and what the tutorial was to cover (content). Worksheets are handed to tutors and the lecturer goes through this worksheet by reading the questions and responding to the question (providing answers). In responding to the question, reference is made to the textbook or relevant reading/s. Some tutors take notes. Tutors generally do not say anything or are not encouraged to participate by asking questions. The lecturer does most of the talking during the time with the tutors. Once the lecturer has discussed the answer to a worksheet question, he may ask if there are any questions from the tutors. There is usually no response. One briefing session consisted of tutors watching the video which students had watched and on which the tutorial task was based. One lecturer told tutors to spend equal time on the different questions. One lecturer ended the briefing session with: “Anything not clear? Straight forward! No questions!” and walked out. There were not many opportunities for tutors to ask questions:

“We (tutors) should have the tuts, the tutors should have a tut and we should debate the issues ... we discuss the issues instead of saying well this is what I want from the tut you know - they (staff) tell us what to do”.

#### **4.11 Staff involvement in the tutorial programme ends once they have briefed the tutors**

Staff see their responsibility ending once the worksheets have been handed to students and the tutors have been briefed. The task once designed, is handed over to students to prepare and tutors are briefed. Staff are not involved in the tutorial programme once they have briefed the tutors:

“You just set the tutorials and then tutors go in”.

#### **4.12 Lack of feedback**

When staff were asked whether they have an idea of what skills were developed at the end of the exercise all staff indicated “no”. Staff do not know if what they intended was achieved or not.

Below are quotations from three different staff members:

“I haven’t the faintest idea”.

“Well you know it’s hard to say because you just set the task and the tutors go in and I never hear much feedback on what happened which I think is one of the problems anyway”.

“I didn’t sit in the tuts so I don’t know and I didn’t necessarily get feedback from the tutors either, so I don’t know whether it did, but I’d imagine that if the students did the task as they should have then it would have developed those skills, ja”.

#### **4.13 Tutor understanding of the learning difficulties of students**

Tutors point out that learning and understanding theory is not necessarily a problem for students. What students need to know is how to apply theory to a question, how to integrate theory with their own ideas and how argue their point of view supported by theory, rather than regurgitating theory. The tutors in essence recognise that student learning difficulties center more around

academic literacy issues.

Tutors identify that students enter university having been accustomed to school which was different in the sense that students could be successful by being able to regurgitate what they learnt, demonstrating knowledge.

#### **4.14 Tutor understanding of academic literacy**

Tutors have a practical understanding of academic literacy, presenting a knowledge of what students need to be able to do within the discipline of psychology in order to be successful. The tutors recognise that students need to bridge the gap between school and university. The tutorial programme has an important role to play in providing the opportunity for students to learn the skills necessary for success within the higher education context, providing the opportunity for students to become involved in the discipline through engaging in discussions and receiving feedback.

Tutors identify writing skills, especially essay writing skills where the student must be able to understand the directive of questions such as compare and contrast, be able to structure an essay and actually bring theory together with practical experience and relevance and integrate the two and to put that across in a logical argument, but also to have the confidence to understand the theory and to go and actually seek out the relevant information. They identify the need for students to understand that they need to read for a degree and especially beyond the prescribed textbook, seeking out information in the library generally and be able to seek and identify relevant information from what they read. Tutors identify the skills of reading and writing, but

highlight higher order skills such as being able to apply and synthesize information and evaluate it in light of a topic or question and being able to present a logical, well founded argument in an essay which is academic. Students need to be familiar with the APA format of referencing. At university and particularly in the discipline of Psychology, tutors highlight the need for students to be able to read and write, seek out information about a topic, consider all possible perspectives and being able to argue for what they believe or agree with. They also identify feedback as important and as an opportunity to practice.

“Students need to be able to utilise feedback especially on essays. Students need to do extra reading to get different aspects of theories. They just don’t read. Need to know how to seek out and locate information which is relevant. Can’t just take information straight out of a text book”.

Staff however appear not to appreciate the tutors understanding of academic literacy. This is evident in the comment below by a staff member:

“The tutors were then just running through it (the tutorials) on kind of autopilot, they weren’t really aware of what to try and develop for the tutorial”.

#### **4.15 Participation and discussion are encouraged**

Staff design tasks to encourage participation and generate discussion in the tutorial. Tasks are designed to generate participation, not for the learning benefits of such participation but more for the interest such discussion would generate in the topic.

Tutors highlight the importance of student participation in tutorials and play an active role in attempting to encourage discussion and debate among the students, where all members share their own ideas.

They use their understanding of group dynamics to encourage participation and discussion. The tutors feel they need to be sensitive to the dynamics in the group. They need to draw out people's opinions and different opinions to get discussion going, playing the gatekeeper function of bringing everybody into the discussion. They also attempt to convey the message in the tutorial that what each person has to contribute is important and that it is usually relevant. The tutors identify those individuals who perhaps have different viewpoints. They may also introduce a topic which is controversial:

“I mean that's what it's that's what this whole facilitation idea is about, it's like giving them the idea to argue or play devil's advocate sometimes where you say, ja but what about this and then you know everyone's like up in arms and have something to say trying to stimulate some kind of discussion”.

It was observed that some tutors attempt to avoid telling students directly that they are wrong. They rather attempt to steering the discussion in the direction they feel is correct, getting students to refer to relevant theories and to use relevant terminology (jargon).

Tutors focus on getting discussion going by asking questions, encouraging students to share their thoughts/answers and asking what others think of the thoughts/answers. The phrase “What do you think?” and other open-ended questions are frequently used in tutorials by the tutors,

encouraging discussion. Some tutors respond positively to student's contributions, saying: "That is good ..." or "Now that's an idea, any others?".

#### **4.16 The creation of a relaxed learning atmosphere by the tutors for the encouragement of discussion**

The tutors attempt to create a relaxed informal atmosphere where students feel free to express their ideas, for discussion to take place. Everyone is on a first name basis including the tutor. Some students speak freely to the tutor and are open, while others are more reserved. In some cases tutors tend to attempt to create an atmosphere of "relaxation" or one of "let's be casual".

#### **4.17 Tutor-centred tutorials**

Tutorials tend to be tutor-centred. As pointed out by a staff member:

"Um so it (tutorial) became a kind of information sharing, this is the right answer, what do you feel, what do you think, can you people get to a consensus perspective".

From observing tutorial session, this is especially the case when there is a difficult concept or when the group lacks a willingness to become actively involved in the learning process. Students generally speak directly to the tutor, facing him/her. The tutor asks questions, students respond. When the students stop responding the tutor tries to encourage more discussion or moves onto the next question on the worksheet. Students tend to look to the tutor for direction - they

physically look in the direction of the tutor with expressions of anticipation. Worksheet questions are read to the students and responses asked for by the tutor. A discussion normally takes place before the next question is read and the same sequence is followed. The questions are gone through in some cases in a very short period of time. Discussions are rather short (on one occasion the discussion lasted just over 1 minute). Tutors attempt to draw out students by asking: "Would anybody else like to add anything?" or "do you agree with the statement?". There is normally no response or a rather weak response. At this point the quieter students may be asked a question by the tutor. Some students sit in the tutorial and respond when prompted by the tutor, only speaking when spoken to.

A point is reached where all is quiet in the venue - there is silence. The tutor looks around the room at the students. Students look at tutor and tutor then faces down, refers to the worksheet and reads the next question from the worksheet.

Some tutors have the relevant readings or the textbook in the tutorial and read out of the readings or text in response to set worksheet questions. This happens when students have already discussed the question and/or when there is a silence. The tutor may say: "Lets see what the text has to say!". This question by the tutor implies that there may be content which has been omitted in the discussion and which may be important. What the text has to say is then sometimes discussed in relation to the question or in general terms or the worksheet is then referred to which tends to guide the events in the tutorial. The focus of discussion tends to focus on students' comprehension of the content relevant to the question.

On occasions the tutorial tends to move away from the set questions with students and tutors

interacting and discussing an issue which is indirectly related to the question posed. After a while the worksheet is referred to and a new question may be read or the same question read again.

Quieter students are sometimes asked a direct question by the tutor, and the response is often direct and short, before the tutor moves on with the tutorial. Only a few students tend to participate. Some tutors try to include everyone by directing questions to those who have not spoken. Other tutors do not.

#### **4.18 Worksheet focus of tutorials**

The worksheets designed by staff and handed to students as preparation for a specific tutorial tend to structure the tutorial, with tutors using it as a central focus and to guide tutorial activities. The tutor initiates the beginning of the tutorial with a statement such as “lets get into this ....”, or “all have the worksheet” or some ask if everyone has the readings or whether everyone has done the readings. The tutor then normally asks the questions posed on the worksheet/s.

#### **4.19 Lack of a serious attitude towards tutorials by tutors**

Some tutors portray the tutorial tasks as not really that “serious”, “lets just get this over”. One tutor joked with the students about only just having seen the “video” over lunch and missing the end of the video. Others indicated at the beginning of the tutorial that the tutorial should be short or: “I am really quite stressed at the moment!” Tutors come across at times as not being fully prepared (disorganised - searching for notes, attendance register) and one or two do not attempt to hide their lack of preparation.

#### **4.20 Student preparation of the tasks**

All students interviewed outlined the same general process in completing tasks. The process outlined was one of basically receiving the task worksheet, reading lecture notes, reading handouts and textbook and occasionally using the library. One student in particular, went about completing the task with the primary aim being the mere completion of the task, where reading was restricted to the minimum material necessary to complete the task:

“I just got books and read through the books. Most of the books that other people had already been through, so they had underlined the important parts for me which is fantastic and then I just copied out those sections”.

Some students highlighted the use of different sources in preparing tasks:

“We had to go to the library to do some extra reading (for Developmental Psychology task). In the case of the violence created through media task, I went and found a couple of newspaper articles rather than books and things like that which was more contemporary and relevant and interesting. None of the library books were particularly helpful. For the one on adolescence sexuality I also went to the library and took books from the short loan. They were already placed there by the lecturer and I just read up on that. And then, ja, I went to the Psychology Department and watched ... the videos”.

“We had to take first the recommended textbook... You go to the library and take

another textbook, two or three textbooks on the impact of media on people. Ok, this is not enough, you need to go through the OPAC system, take some more journal articles to substantiate what you have just said and then you come back, go to the tut ..., this is your draft essay, I am not satisfied with this one, OK, I think I need to get some more ideas from other people you know or use another reference. So this was the progression that we need to follow”.

“In preparing tasks generally used the textbook, the library, applied personal view in preparing Personality task”.

One student mentioned reading journal articles, while four mentioned the use of videos in preparing tasks. Another mentioned research on the internet and another sought newspaper articles.

#### **4.21 Student interest in the tasks**

Students were asked in the interview to identify the task which they found most interesting during the course of the year. Three students identified the Learning and Memory task as the most interesting, two students identified the Intelligence, Language and Thought task as the most interesting, while one student identified the Developmental Psychology task, another the Industrial Psychology task and another the Personality task. All students express a positive attitude towards the tasks which they identified as most interesting. In providing rationale as to why they chose the task they did, they all tended to highlight the fact that they felt they could relate to the task and that the task allowed for participation within the tutorial group:

“I think I found it more interesting because it was more directly relevant to everyday life. You could see the influences directly ... Um, it was thought provoking ... it wasn't just handed out. It kind of challenged you and got you to think”.

“I think it was the first one really that sort of applied to human interaction, it wasn't Maslow says this and Freud says that, it was an actual case study and you could see how they were using the skills and it was quite interesting. I enjoyed that, I thought that, finally somebody's going to ask me my opinion and not ask me to reiterate a theory”.

#### **4.22 Student attitude towards the tasks**

With respect to tasks generally, students tend to see the tasks as a supplement to the content of the lectures, where a section of the course is taken and focussed on in the tutorial system, there to broaden their knowledge and understanding of the content. The tasks are seen by all the students interviewed to be a means of preparing them for the tutorial group discussion:

“By writing these tasks and answering the questions you just get the basis and then you discuss it in the tut and it broadens that a lot”.

In general, students do not understand that the underlying purpose of tasks is to develop the academic literacy of students.

The attitude shown by students was varied, ranging from positive (four students), to indifferent (two students) to bored (one student). No student explicitly expressed a negative attitude towards tasks in general or an unwillingness to prepare for and engage in the tasks.

Those who were positive generally saw the tasks as preparing them for exams, providing a structure for participation in tutorials and the opportunity for feedback, especially from other students. One student in particular expressed the helpfulness of tasks, particularly in providing structure to situations where he was sometimes confused. The task gave him a structure to deal or grapple with course content. It provides a structure to take to the tutorial and on which to obtain guidance from the tutor:

“Because sometimes I have the information but how to group it together was quite difficult”.

The two students who were indifferent both found the content of the tasks not to be stimulating, but one of these students saw the tasks as necessary for group discussion in the tutorials, while the other one saw the task a mere course requirement. These two students’ attitude was influenced by whether they were interested in the content of the particular task:

“You don’t really get much out of them, or the preparation anyway. I think that the actual tutorial where you discuss the work and share your thoughts with other people is a lot more rewarding than going home and doing it by yourself. ... if you had to just do the tutorials and hand the work in, it would seem pointless”.

The student who explicitly said that he was bored found the content to be boring and believed that he was influenced in a negative way towards tutorials by his tutor.

#### **4.23 Passive student involvement in tutorials**

Observation of tutorials found that some students stare out into space, out the window or down onto the floor and even when asked a question directly by the tutor do not appear too interested in exerting themselves to provide a well thought through answer. The answer is “Ja, no, I agree” and with some student facial expression (smile, frown, pulling up of nose and giggling) and behaviour (turning away from facing tutor to face floor or others in tut and only looks at tutor again when tutor starts talking) portrays a message of amusement and “I don’t really care”. Students refer back to notes and sometimes read an answer directly from what they have written in front of them when asked a question by the tutor.

Tutors identified lack of participation of students and student attitudes of just wanting to finish the tutorial early as problematic.

#### **4.24 Challenge of tutoring English second language students**

In tutoring, the tutors identified problems in running the tutorial to include students who are not First Language English speakers. Tutors experience these students as less confident than first language English students in expressing their ideas.

#### **4.25 Tutorial groups are too large**

Staff, tutors and students all feel that the size of the tutorial groups is too large for effective tutorials. The impact of large tutorial groups worked against the encouragement of an environment where students felt free and uninhibited to participate and discuss relevant issues.

#### **4.26 Too few tutorials during the academic year**

Tutors felt that there are too few tutorials for a relationship to be developed between the tutors and their respective groups. They felt that the different tutorial groups only started to perform well as a tutorial group towards the end of the year. It was evident from the observation of tutorial that tutors did not know the names of all the students in the group and that students also did not know that names of all their fellow students in the tutorial.

The majority of students interviewed similarly felt that more tutorials during the first-year would be beneficial to them.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### DISCUSSION OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

#### 1. OVERVIEW

Given the literature review and the findings presented in the previous chapter, this chapter is concerned with the discussion of those findings. The discussion however is not structured around the adapted CIPP model (Calder, 1995) outlined in the methodology and used to structure the presentation of the research findings. To structure the discussion around context, input and process evaluation would prevent the researcher from discussing relationships within the data.

#### 2. AN INTEGRATED APPROACH TO ACADEMIC DEVELOPMENT

Higher education institutions in South Africa are challenged to develop effective and independent learners of students who do not all have what it takes to succeed in the university learning context (Craig, 1989). In response to this challenge, the Department of Psychology at Rhodes University has, in principle, chosen to integrate academic development into mainstream teaching and learning where all students are developed academically, not just the group of so-called disadvantaged students.

Current academic development literature favours an integrated approach to academic development within the higher education context (Bulman & Parkinson, 1991; Frame & Senequ; 1991; Millar & Boughey, 1991; Rajah; 1991; Boughey, 1994; Scott, 1994; Drewett, 1995; Amos & Quinn, 1997; Bulman, 1997) but there is little empirical support for this approach. In this

approach, academic development is integrated into mainstream disciplines themselves, where emphasis is on universities and departments changing in order to develop students academically.

An integrated approach is in contrast to the academic support or “add-on” approach to academic development identified by Morphet (1994). The “add-on” approach is where academic development is a service removed from mainstream teaching and learning and provided by academic development practitioners catering mainly to provide the so-called disadvantaged group of students with the general academic skills to cope within the higher education context. The skills are however, developed within students in isolation of the mainstream disciplines themselves. Students are then expected to transfer the general academic skills across the various disciplines. But, given the nature of universities as a criss-crossing matrix of disciplines (Clark, 1978; Spivey et al., 1992; Becher cited in Fisher, 1995) each with their own set of groundrules (Moll and Slonimsky, 1989), the transfer of general academic skills can be difficult for students. Also, the groundrules refer to not only the textual conventions but also to ways in which what counts as knowledge within specific disciplines, including Psychology, is construed and explored (Boughey, 1994). In light of this understanding of higher education, an integrated approach to academic development is preferable to an add-on approach. For students to be successful within higher education, Moll and Slonimsky (1989) argue that students need to learn to mobilise the cognitive processes entailed in the groundrules of specific disciplines such as Psychology. This learning to mobilise the groundrules of a specific discipline is not distinct from learning the content of the subject and, in light of Vygotsky (1978), needs to be social and dialectical in nature.

Through supporting an integrated approach to academic development, the Department of

Psychology accepts responsibility for the academic development of all students within the discipline. At the same time, the Department recognises that some students may need academic support but believe this should be seen as separate from the pursuit of academic development. The need for academic support in addition to an integrated approach to academic development, is borne out by the tutors experience of difficulties with English second language students in the tutorials. However, with this research tutors, staff and students made no reference to the academic support which should be available for such students. The risk of neglecting to provide an academic support service is that the needs of students who need such support are not provided for.

### **3. CONCEPTUALISING ACADEMIC DEVELOPMENT**

There is an abundance of academic development literature (Badsha, 1994, Israel, 1995; Drewett, 1995; Van der Riet, Gilbert, Kelly & Fischer, 1996; Caldwell, 1997; Eastmond, 1997; Paulson & Small, 1997) which advances the need for academic development within higher education in South Africa. Within this literature though, the conceptualisation of academic development as a practice tends to remain at the philosophical level. If academic development is to be integrated into mainstream teaching and learning, there is a need to be more concrete and apparent in what is meant by academic development and what is to be implemented and how it is to be implemented. There is a dearth of practical guidelines within academic development literature. This is a limitation to the advancement of an integrated approach to academic development where mainstream academics (arguably amateurs to the integration of academic development) need to integrate academic development into the teaching and learning processes of their respective disciplines. Becher (cited in Fisher, 1995) argues for example that academic staff take

the discourse of their discipline so for granted that it is never explicitly taught.

Following an integrated approach to academic development, each discipline needs to conceptualise academic development for itself and the best actors to do this would be academic staff as they are the most assimilated into their discipline. A blanket application of a universal understanding of academic development would consequently be inappropriate. Staff may, according to Becher (cited in Fisher, 1995), take the discourse of their discipline so for granted that they may well find it difficult to conceptualise or may even lack the motivation or neglect to see the need for academic development.

In the Department of Psychology at Rhodes University, the understanding and conceptualisation of academic development within the discipline evolved over time and was only concluded as a result of an extensive research process within the discipline at Rhodes University (See Fischer, Gilbert, Kelly & Van der Riet, 1995). Emerging from this study was a broad definition of academic development as a concern for the development of three types of literacy, namely academic, professional and vocational literacy (see Appendix 1). This definition of academic development indicates an attempt on the part of the Psychology Department to move from the philosophical level to a more concrete and apparent level which would be useful in the integration of academic development into the teaching and learning processes of Psychology.

The inclusion of vocational and professional literacy as part of academic development is a novel idea and indicates an awareness of not only assisting students to cope academically. Rather, it indicates a strategic intention to prepare students during their academic career at university for their future chosen career within the discipline of Psychology. This preparation is in addition to

the teaching and learning of the content of Psychology. It is in line with Tierney and Rhodes' (cited in Fisher, 1995) assertion that the undergraduate years also serve to introduce individuals to the prospective roles and expectations of various professions. Amos and Quinn (1997) similarly point that students need to be prepared to cope in their future careers as well as academically. However, literature research yielded very little information of undergraduate or graduate programmes which have explicitly included vocational and professional literacy into their academic development interventions. The academic development literature concentrates on preparing students academically rather than on preparing them vocationally and professionally for their future careers. In light of the lack of information on such a distinction in the literature, it is not clear what the relationship is between academic, vocational and professional literacy. If the academic literacy of a discipline is entailed in the groundrules of a particular discipline, it could be argued that academic literacy is part and parcel of the vocational and professional literacy of Psychology as a discipline and as a career and should consequently not be conceptualised as three separate types of literacy. Consequently, by learning the groundrules of a discipline, the student is learning the academic, vocational and professional literacy of the discipline.

Other than broadly defining academic development as a concern with the three different types of literacy, the Department of Psychology was also able to make explicit the particular academic, vocational and professional literacy required in the discipline. This the Department was able to do through a working definition of each type of literacy (see Appendix 1) as well as through the formulation of the specific academic, vocational and professional literacy skills expected of students by the end of each year of study (see Appendix 2 for the academic literacy expected of students at the end of each year of study) from first year to the honours level. This pre-

determined list of specific skills to be developed is an indication of the attempt by the Psychology Department to make academic development concrete and apparent. This attempt to move from the philosophical level to the practical level can be useful in conceptualising what is meant in everyday academic activities.

This discussion, having highlighted and briefly discussed the broader inclusion of vocational and professional literacy in the Department of Psychology's conceptualisation of academic development will now focus on academic literacy. This is in line with the focus of this research.

#### **4. CONCEPTUALISING THE ACADEMIC LITERACY OF PSYCHOLOGY**

Dison et al. (1996) argue that academic literacy is at the heart of students' ability to succeed at university and specifically within particular disciplines such as Psychology. The Department of Psychology has conceptualised academic literacy in terms of academic skills to be developed in an attempt to make it concrete and apparent. Like the conceptualisation of academic development within the discipline, the conceptualisation of academic literacy evolved over time and was only concluded as a result of the extensive research process within the discipline at Rhodes University (See Fischer, Gilbert, Kelly & Van der Riet, 1995) which has already been noted earlier in this discussion.

If Langer's (1987) socio-cognitive view of academic literacy is however considered, then the Department of Psychology's conceptualisation tends to be consistent with authors such as Leibowitz (1995) and others (Ballard & Clanchy cited in Taylor et al., 1988; Boughey, 1994; Leibowitz, 1995; Newman & Trechs, 1996; Amos & Quinn, 1997) who view academic literacy

narrowly as a student's ability to read and write effectively within the university context in order to succeed from one level to another. The conceptualisation is however limited in terms of Langer's (1987) broader socio-cognitive perspective in the sense that it focuses primarily on the student's ability to read and write within Psychology. Langer's (ibid) perspective is broad in the sense that it focuses not just on reading and writing within a discipline but rather on sophisticated forms of cognitive activity necessary to deal successfully with Strohm Kitchener's (1983) ill-structured problems which are typical of the discipline of Psychology. Such cognitive activity refers to the student's ability to generate a solution to an ill-structured problem by synthesising or integrating information from diverse sources (Strohm Kitchener, 1983), evaluating the information from the sources (Rescher, 1976), making judgements about information on what may be opposing sides of the problem (Toulmin, 1958) and constructing an argument as a reasonable solution (Rescher, 1976; Toulmin, Reike & Janik, 1979).

It is however, difficult to conceptualise these sophisticated forms of cognitive activity in a concrete way which is apparent and useful to the academic development practitioner or mainstream academic wanting to develop these activities within students. This difficulty is manifested in the literature with little clear and concrete information of the cognitive processes or activities required for success within higher education. Academic development literature tends to keep information concerning student cognitive processes at the abstract level and may well be one explanation for the exclusion of the development of cognitive processes from the Department of Psychology's conceptualisation of academic literacy.

The Department of Psychology though does identify its intention to develop in first year students the awareness of how psychology is different from other subjects (See Appendix 2) . This is

making students aware of the ill-structured nature of problems within the discipline and that there are certain groundrules peculiar to the discipline. This awareness can be an important start in developing the students' epistemic knowledge that if complementary or antithetical solutions to a problem emerge, each may have some validity and that there may be no absolute correct choice between them (Strohm Kitchener, 1983). The quotation below from the findings of the research illustrates the awareness on behalf of the Department of Psychology that students need to develop an awareness of the ill-structured nature of the discipline of Psychology:

“There isn't one right answer ... that there's one correct way and there's one text that we have to look at and if we learn that text off by heart and then we'll be alright then there's no need to consult alternative texts ... there isn't uh a need to always to return to the text to find out what's happening” Um, ... the aim of the tutorial programme is to get students to start thinking about psychological issues in a more personal manner, to teach them certain skills like essay writing, understanding arguments, reading through texts and to understand what's being said and to feed it back, um to get them to enjoy Psychology I, to make it more lived, to make it something that affects them and they can speak about and share ideas with, um to give them space and time to explore ideas that they don't have time to explore in lectures because the lecturer is trying to get through content, getting them to understand that they need to like explore more and this is the space for them to do it, um to get them to participate and engage in psychology in a more constructive meaningful manner instead of just sitting down and taking notes um to speak about, to live Psychology. ... to make Psychology I fun, um make it interesting, to make it more alive, to hear other people's viewpoints, ...

to provide space”.

## **5. AN INCREMENTAL APPROACH TO DEVELOPING THE ACADEMIC LITERACY OF STUDENTS**

In integrating academic literacy development into mainstream teaching and learning, Fischer and Van der Riet (1997) argue for an incremental approach, whereby academic literacy competencies are developed in a progressive manner. In addition, Dixie (1996) argues for scaffolding where help and hints are provided to students at the beginning of a year but is gradually removed as the year progresses. There appears to be a lack of concrete attempts to provide scaffolding in the Psychology tutorial programme. However, as evident in the Department of Psychology academic development policy document, the idea is to follow an incremental approach in developing the pre-determined list of academic skills over the different year levels within the discipline. The overall intention to develop skills incrementally over the course of a student's years within the discipline is present within the Department but there is no evidence from the findings of this research that such intention exists or is implemented into specifically the first year Psychology tutorial programme.

In terms of the incremental approach, it is not made clear within the literature as to what academic literacy skills need to be developed in the first and subsequent years of study with a particular discipline. Also, with respect to the development of academic literacy in its broader sense (that is the development of cognitive processes), the literature is not clear as to what cognitive processes are expected from students at the end of their first year or subsequent years for that matter. It would be myopic to expect students within their first year to achieve the

academic literacy equivalent to that of academic staff who have acquired the literacy of the discipline through sustained involvement in the cultural milieu of the discipline. It may well be that, following an incremental approach, in their first year of study within Psychology, students need to develop according to Leibowitz (1995) and others (Ballard & Clanchy cited in Taylor et al., 1988; Boughey, 1994; Leibowitz, 1995; Newman & Trechs, 1996; Amos & Quinn, 1997), the ability to read and write effectively within the university context. This ability characterises what Strohm Kitchener (1983) refers to as level-1 cognitive tasks and has been identified and made clear within the Department of Psychology as a skill to be developed at the first year level. The Department also offers a perspective on how the ability can be developed.

On the other hand, although the need for an incremental approach has been discussed above, a risk with such an approach is that students may see the academic skills developed at the first year level as the only skills necessary for success within the university context at all levels. This may be problematic in exposing students to and developing the necessary academic skills during subsequent years. A more holistic approach to the development of academic skills at the first year level may consequently be an alternative to the incremental approach. Such an approach may make students aware of the academic skills (level-1, level-2 and level-3 cognitive processes) necessary for success within the university context and begin developing these skills in the first year to be developed further in subsequent years. Such an approach may however prove to be overwhelming for a first year student.

To generate a solution to what Strohm Kitchener (1983) refers to as an ill-structured problem by synthesising and evaluating information and using reasoning to argue a solution, students need to have mastered Bloom's (1956) lower-order skills of knowledge and comprehension. In the

first year, the emphasis can be on these cognitive processes with the idea of setting the foundation in terms of the basic knowledge and understanding required as well as developing what Strohm Kitchener (1983) refers to as the metacognitive level of students. This level according to Strohm Kitchener (1983) refers to knowledge about cognitive tasks (reading, perceiving, computing and memorising), about particular strategies that may be invoked to solve the task and about when and how the strategy should be applied. This is important and as already discussed, the programme wants to encourage students to realise that there are different theories and no one correct answer immediately available. Inferring from the ideas of Strohm Kitchener (1983), students require the epistemic knowledge that each solution may have some validity and that there may be no absolute correct choice between them and that their task is to develop a strategy to solve the problem. At the first year level, students are only becoming aware of the nature of the discipline of psychology, but are not yet putting the higher order cognitive process of what Bloom (1956) calls synthesis and evaluation into practice within the discipline. They are not yet bringing reason and argument to bear on the problems.

Bloom's (1956) taxonomy can be useful in making the cognitive processes concrete and apparent for students and staff to understand. It can be explained to students that within the Department of Psychology, the tutorial programme, with its various tasks and exercises is designed to require students to apply and practise the various academic skills and cognitive processes, recognising that in the final analysis, evaluation or what the different actors within the discipline of Psychology refer to as critical thinking skills is the most complex and important. At the first year level it may well be appropriate to provide an opportunity for students to develop Strohm Kitchener's (1983) level-1 cognitive tasks of reading, perceiving, computing and memorising as well as developing their level-2 or metacognitive processes (ibid). These second level,

metacognitive processes include knowledge about cognitive tasks (e.g., how to memorise a list of words), about particular strategies that may be invoked to solve the task (e.g., saying the word out loud), of when and how the strategy should be applied (e.g., when one is required to remember the different stages of Piaget's theory) and about the success or failure of any of these processes. This would develop the foundation of knowledge and understanding of Psychology content to be build upon in subsequent years as well as the level-2 cognitive processes within students to acquire and develop their knowledge and understanding. Evidence of developing level-2 processes is present in the Department of Psychology's list of academic skills to be developed at the first year level: being aware of the resources within the Department (lecturers, tutors, peers, SI, video library) and building confidence with using them and being able to respond effectively to feedback in its various forms (lecturers, tutors, peers, SI). Students can utilise the feedback to gauge the success or failure of their level-2 cognitive processes and by being aware of the resources within the Department and being confident in using them can develop their knowledge and understanding.

On a cautionary note, it is important to be clear on what is expected of students when examination questions are set. Here staff need to make sure that they are not expecting students to mobilise cognitive processes which they have not yet had an opportunity to learn to mobilise during the course of the year.

In sum, the Psychology Department conceptualises the academic skills to be developed in terms of a working definition and a list of academic skills to be developed at each year. This conceptualisation in the first year tends to be narrow in relation to Langer's (1987) broader socio-cognitive view of academic literacy, but may well be appropriate in terms of the

incremental approach to developing these skills over a number of years. There is however a need to conceptualise academic literacy explicitly in terms of Langer's (1987) socio-cognitive view or in terms of the cognitive processes to be developed at each year as it is these processes which determine academic success within a discipline. The conceptualisation of academic literacy by identifying the academic skills to be developed reflects an attempt to move from the philosophical to a more concrete and apparent level. It may well be necessary to remain at the philosophical level in terms of the cognitive processes to be developed and to use metaphors (imagery) to create a vision of what is to be developed within students. If the absence of making the cognitive processes concrete and apparent in the literature is an indication, making such cognitive processes concrete and apparent may be difficult or practically impossible. From a critical perspective, this difficulty may well inspire questions as to the role and relevance of academic development within higher education.

On the other hand, the difficulty may well indicate a need to rather create an image within staff of what is to be achieved or to develop an academic literacy philosophy within staff. After all it is the philosophy of a person that affects the behaviour of that person (See for example Kelly, 1955; McGregor, 1960; Sterling Livingston, 1969; Hall, 1994). If staff embrace a philosophy and an awareness of academic development, this philosophy will influence their teaching within a particular discipline. They would then be teaching from an academic development perspective of developing the academic literacy of students. This would clearly be different from teaching from a perspective of not accepting the importance of academic literacy within the academic success of students. The development of an awareness of academic development and academic literacy plays an important role in bringing about personal change of academic staff to transform their teaching to incorporate and develop the academic literacy of students (See Kelly, 1955).

Awareness however may not be enough if it only engenders good intentions. Action or real change within academic departments and universities is what is required if student learning difficulties are to be addressed effectively.

## **6. UTILISING THE SOCIAL NATURE OF LEARNING WITHIN PSYCHOLOGY**

Developing the academic literacy of students in an integrated manner is about assimilating students into the higher education culture where students need to learn and adopt the ways or the groundrules of the academic culture of each discipline. The approach is consistent with Johns (1990) who argues for the need for the direct initiation of students into academic culture. Much theoretical support for this initiation of students into the cultural milieu of an academic discipline is derived primarily from the work of the cognitive development theorist, Vygotsky (1978) with his conceptualisation of the concepts of mediation and the zone of proximal development. Literature research (Bruner, 1964; Luria, 1976; Vygotsky, 1978) yielded information on the social and dialectical nature of learning, implying that if student cognitive potential is to be actualised, higher education needs to ensure that social conditions are in place to facilitate learning. Van der Riet et al. (1996) similarly argue that a range of actors share responsibility for growing into academic life and that learning and teaching takes place not in the heads or personal lives of individuals but within relationships between people and the contexts in which they operate.

Vygotsky (1978) refers to mediation as the process whereby a more experienced person structures and conducts an interaction with another, less experienced other, over a particular task though the medium of language. Tutors within the Department of Psychology facilitate all the

first year tutorial sessions. It is through interaction with another, more experienced individual (the lecturer or tutor) and other students that the student internalises the rules and regulations of the social life he is embedded in (higher education context) and the ‘ways of doing’ (groundrules) which constitute the requirements for success within specific disciplines. Also, collaboration or mediation with another person, either an adult or a more competent peer, in the zone of proximal development leads to development in culturally appropriate ways. With respect to Psychology, such culturally appropriate ways would refer to the development of cognitive processes entailed in the groundrules of Psychology as a specific discipline. It is these cognitive processes which are potentially present in the student. For Vygotsky (1978), these cognitive processes are in the process of maturation - the buds or flowers of development rather than the fruits of development. This potential can be developed through collaboration or mediation with others.

In light of the social and dialectical nature of learning (Bruner, 1964; Luria, 1976; Langer, 1987; Vygotsky, 1978), tutorials have the potential to provide students with a valuable social context in which students can develop their cognitive processes through collaboration or mediation with others. Drawing on the ideas of a number of authors (Bruner, 1964; Luria, 1976; Vygotsky, 1978; Langer, 1987; Pastoll, 1992; Radloff & Murphey, 1992; Caldwell, 1997), the tutorial is the ideal site for the development of the academic literacy of students. Within the Psychology Department during 1997, the first year tutorial programme was used as the site for the academic development of students. Tutorials as an organised small group situation provide the ideal context for interactive and communicative relations where students can develop the academic literacy valued by a specific discipline within the higher education context. Craig (1989) for example, argues for the potential of tutorials for dialogue, conversation, debate, discussion and

argument among peers while Radloff & Murphy (1992) argue for the potential of tutorials achieving 'deep learning' as opposed to 'surface learning', which involves rote-learning. Tutorials contrast to lectures. Lectures usually contain a great number of students and the instruction is usually in the form of one way communication from the lecturer. There is little or no opportunity for discussion within lectures. Tutorials on the other hand consist of a few students under the guidance of a tutor who meet to discuss certain aspects of the course. This opportunity for social and dialectical interaction provides the most appropriate opportunity within higher education for students to master the tools and signs of the culture they are part of. It is in this site that mediation can occur between students and the tutor. The tutorial also provides a valuable opportunity for students to raise and clarify concerns, problems and misunderstandings.

In creating a learning environment within a tutorial, it is preferable argues Pastoll (1992) if there are fewer rather than more people. Psychology tutorial groups tend to be too big. It was also found that both tutors and students felt that there were too few tutorials during the year. This hindered the development of a relationship between the tutors and the students as well as among the students. Some tutorial groups only began performing as a social learning unit towards the end of the year. Tutorials are not held every Monday and there is confusion for students as to when tutorials are taking place and confusion for tutors as to when briefing sessions are taking place. The dates of tutorials are not made explicit to students well in advance. The dates of tutorials could be included in a module in the form of a handout at the beginning of each term. The tasks to be completed by students for each tutorial could also be included in the handout. This would allow students time to complete and prepare the tasks when they deem appropriate.

## 7. TUTORIAL TASKS

If the tutorial is to be successful, the idea is that staff design tasks to provide students with the opportunity to experience academic literacy tasks and processes to develop specific academic skills within the discipline. Craig (1989) highlights the importance of the nature and limits of knowledge and knowing 'riding' on the back of subject specific content in order to be effective. This is in contrast to Amos and Quinn (1997) who argue that in conceptualising courses it would be valuable if less emphasis was placed on the content students are required to learn and more on what students need to cope academically within a discipline, implying an either-or relationship between content and academic literacy. In line with the social nature of learning (Vygotsky, 1978), the tasks should also encourage participation and discussion among students within the tutorial so that, as noted by Langer (1987, p.11), the students can "see models of literate behaviour as other people engage in literacy activities, and when they talk and ask questions about what is happening, why, and how". The challenge to staff is to integrate the development of academic literacy into course content.

In the case of the Psychology Department, the aim is for the tutorial tasks to develop the pre-determined academic literacy skills (Appendix 2) within first year students. The conscious focus of task design though, tends to remain with content alone. Although the Department of psychology has a list of pre-determined academic skills to be developed, the various staff members identified a range of different skills they intended to develop through their tutorial tasks. Staff tended to identify one or two skills they intended to develop and no staff member accurately identified the skills as per the pre-determined list. It is not clear that staff have made the complete paradigm shift to fully accepting the importance and place of academic

development and consciously integrate this development into the design of tutorial tasks. The academic literacy skills instead are a by-product of task design.

Although staff identify academic skills they do not appear to have an in-depth understanding of the rationale behind the development of academic literacy or how to integrate the development of the pre-determined skills into the design of their tutorial task. They do however, argue that if students prepare properly they will develop the skills. The skills referred to are the one or two skills identified by the particular staff member and not from the pre-determined list of academic skills to be developed. Also, the skills staff hope to develop within students are not made explicit to students. The skills identified by staff as important to develop are the obvious academic skills such as accessing information and critical thinking. The identification of these skills though tend to be for the mere sake of identifying skills and do not form part of the inherent and conscious aim of designing tutorial tasks. There is awareness among staff that there are certain skills which have to be developed and that there are certain processes which need to be engaged in, but this is not made explicit, nor are there active efforts on the part of staff through task design to develop these skills. Staff appear not to be committed to the tutorial programme and the same applies to some tutors. Staff are not designing their individual tasks as part of a broader programme and they identify the concern. The reason for this can be the absence of tactical strategies for the implementation of academic literacy development. They are aware that there needs to be an overall integrated approach, a broad blueprint.

## **8. TEACHING AND LEARNING AS A SHARED RESPONSIBILITY OF A RANGE OF ACTORS**

### **8.1 Developing and supporting staff for a new role**

The Department of Psychology recognises the important role of staff in the first year tutorial programme. Academic staff are the actors most absorbed into the discipline of psychology and consequently play an important role in initiating students into the culture of psychology. Vygotsky (1978) argues that what is learnt in the external world with the help of another is internalised and in the process brings about internal transformations, allowing the student to learn to mobilise the cognitive processes necessary for success within psychology. As such, staff play an important role as mediators within the discipline of psychology.

It is recognised by the Department of Psychology that academic development is a shared responsibility among staff where staff need to include academic development in their teaching. The Department further points out that it is committed to the development of staff in academic development competencies.

The integration of academic development into tutorials will be a new approach for many staff members. Other than being provided with opportunities for development, staff need to be provided with support in making the transition into their new teaching role. Although not evident in the findings of the research, the potential of resistance to the integration of academic development into teaching practices needs to be anticipated. A strategy needs to be in place to manage the resistance and to assist staff in the transition to the integration of academic

development into their teaching and moving away from an attitude of it is not their responsibility (See Kotter and Schlesinger, 1983 for strategies of coping with resistance to change). Such a strategy needs to be in place if the Department of Psychology is serious about the full integration of academic development into mainstream teaching and learning as the academic staff are important mediators in the process.

## **8.2 The role of the student**

Pastoll (1992) argues that learning is an active process and for Fischer and Van der Riet (1997), students need to be active participants in their own education, learning to increase their levels of academic literacy during the course of their undergraduate degree. Psychology first year students tend not to be active participants in their own education, seeking to increase their levels of academic literacy. The awareness on the part of students that during the course of their education, academic development will need to occur tends not to be present. Students experience the tutorial programme as positive but tend not to understand the academic development rationale behind the programme and that the programme is inherently providing an opportunity for them to develop their academic literacy within the discipline by virtue of the fact that discussion is taking place. Students identify the discussion part of tutorials as positive, even if they themselves don't participate. They feel they learn from the discussion, but this learning refers more to the learning of the content of the course than to developing academic literacy.

The student, argue Fischer and Van der Riet (1997), must develop an awareness of the process of meeting the academic literacy requirements of Psychology. Fischer and Van der Riet's (ibid) argument places much responsibility on students, but the findings of this research portray an

image of the student lacking awareness of this responsibility. Student awareness of the academic literacy expectations at first year and the importance of academic development needs to be developed within the discipline of Psychology. The Department of Psychology needs to accept responsibility for developing this awareness. Psychology first year students tend not to be the active participants they need to be in order to ensure the success of their academic career within Psychology. Students however do sense that lecturers are not always involved and committed. This is an important finding in light of Vygotsky's (1978) argument for the important role of mediators in initiating people into a cultural milieu. The Department may be able to develop the awareness through its staff playing an effective mediation role and through this medium be able to develop the active role of students.

Many students are spectators for the duration of the year, neglecting to actively participate in tutorials. In light of this, Fischer and Van der Riet's (ibid) argument neglects to provide guidelines as to what can be done within a tutorial programme to assist students in developing an awareness that they need to become active participants in their own learning and actively seek to develop this literacy. This could be done by the department explicitly communicating the academic development goals and philosophy to students highlighting the importance of academic development and the benefits to all students. The department needs to outline its attitude towards students as active adult participants in their own education and as such, the aim and design of the tutorial programme needs to be explained to students. This will assist students in knowing the process they are to be involved in and for them to understand what they are doing with the tutorial programme in terms of the development of academic literacy.

Tasks tend to be completed for the mere sake of completing the tasks and not for the academic

development potential of the tasks. Students do however feel that discussion is beneficial. The rationale behind tasks need to be made clear to students. In other words they need to understand why they are doing the tasks, the benefits of the tasks and what they should ideally learn from the tasks. They see the tutorial process as one of being asked questions to which they need to respond with an answer.

### **8.3 Tutors as mediators**

Within the Department of Psychology, tutorials take place in various small rooms under the guidance of a tutor. Vygotsky (1978) highlights the importance of a more experienced other in mediating the learning process. Mediation according to Vygotsky (ibid) is the process whereby a more experienced person structures and conducts an interaction with another, less experienced, other, over a particular task through the medium of language. As argued by Mather (1997), tutors are ideally positioned to influence first year students as first year students will perceive senior students as being successful in the system and an authority, of sorts, on how to achieve the desired outcome. Also, Pastoll (1992) describes the ideal tutorial as one where there are peers rather than authority figures. Tutors as senior students then are ideally positioned to play the role of mediator and in line with the argument above, the presence of a tutor who is a senior student within the discipline of Psychology is preferable to an academic staff member.

The tutors within the Department of Psychology accept that their role is important but it is not clear if they have the understanding as to why their role is important. They appear not to understand the philosophy behind their role, although they do understand their role from a practical perspective, arguing that students should learn from them. Evidence of their

understanding of their role is that they are able to recognise shortcomings of the programme as well as problems experienced and offer suggestions for improvement. The tutors are generally positive, but feel that their role is not always acknowledged by the Department. Given the role of the tutoring system within an integrated approach to the development of academic literacy, there needs to be more attention paid to the tutors of the Department in reinforcing their role and providing the necessary support and development for the tutors to fulfill their role to the maximum.

As far as possible, Psychology tutors at the first year level attempt to create a social learning environment with a relaxed, familiar atmosphere where students can feel free to share their thoughts and ideas and express themselves. Even some of the tutorial venues attempt to create this environment with the inclusion of mattresses in the venue. In some of these venues though, mattresses are arranged in a U-shape with the tutor taking the position in front with all students facing him. Such a set-up would contribute to perceptions of the tutor as, what Radloff and Murphy (1992) call the fount of all knowledge, not contributing to breaking the power relationship between the tutor who would be seen to have the knowledge and students who don't.

Although tutors attempt to create a social and familiar learning environment, many first year Psychology students however, did not know the names of others in their tutorial. Some tutors also did not know the names of all the students in their tutorial. This detracts from the level of familiarity and freedom to express oneself in the tutorial. It would help if the first tutorial aimed at creating a minimum level of familiarity among students through team-building exercises. Here basic ice-breaker exercises could be used (See Woodcock, 1988), where the tutorial is devoted to team-building, providing an opportunity for students to get to know each other. This can

facilitate the process of students working together throughout the year. It will also provide an opportunity for tutors to get to know the students and for the students to get to know the tutor. It also presents an opportunity for the tutor to establish norms for behaviour in the group which can serve as useful guidelines for behaviour and interaction throughout the year. Also, expectations can be clarified. Students can be informed of the departmental academic development philosophy and what the department expects of students. The tutor could also outline what he expects and so too can students identify what they expect of the tutor and of each other. The academic development goals and rationale can be discussed and clarified as well. The ice-breaker exercises would help in taking the tutorial group through the first of the commonly known group development stages of forming and ease the process of proceeding through the others of storming, forming, performing and finally at the end of first year, adjourning. Tutors pointed out that the tutorial groups tended to start performing only towards the end of the year. The programme design consequently needs to take group dynamics into account as well and be structured to ensure that the social nature of learning facilitates the academic development of students from as early as possible.

Even though the tutors attempt to facilitate learning through stimulating discussion and creating a social environment, they revert to being tutor-centred when there is a passive response from students, who generally do not understand that the underlying purpose of tutorial tasks is to develop the academic literacy of students as already discussed.

Tutors recognise that there are situations which they do not know how to deal with, the most important being getting students to participate willingly. Other than focussing on developing student awareness of the importance of participation, continued tutor development may assist

tutors in being able to identify the situations they feel they are unable to handle and to receive the necessary training. Tutors need to be briefed more effectively and also need to be provided with an opportunity to discuss and talk about difficulties they may be experiencing in their tutorial during the briefing session. Other tutors and the staff member will be available during the briefing session to provide suggestions. Other tutors in particular may have had similar experiences and could share these. This would also serve as a form of ongoing development. They play a vital role in the success of the tutorial programme and should not be underestimated. They need to be seen and treated as valuable to the Department. At the beginning of each year, tutors for the first year need to be carefully selected. Tutors should be selected on the basis that they need to get along with the first year students and have an ability to facilitate the first year learning experience. Tutor training should not only focus on developing the tutors understanding of academic literacy and the importance of developing academic literacy, but they should also be sensitised to facilitation or student-centered tutorials as the appropriate style of tutoring. Intensive training at the beginning of the year, before the tutors have started to tutor, may not be necessary if the philosophy is first to let the tutors experience tutoring and then to focus on regular follow-up training. The experience of tutoring then provides the tutors with practical experience to draw on during the training. Training should not be seen as a once-off initiative. Tutors also need a communication channel to the Department. A tutor representative could serve such a role, as well as regular meetings between the staff responsible for teaching at the first year level and tutors. This would be an opportunity for staff to gain a sense for what tutors are experiencing at the coal face and may be a source of valuable information about the first year class. Similarly, each tutorial could have a student representative, who could meet with other tutorial representatives with staff and tutors once a term as a forum for feedback.

#### **8.4 Tutor briefing sessions**

Ad-hoc briefing sessions tend not to adequately prepare tutors for their role as mediator and the academic literacy skills to be developed are implicit. The briefing session is an important site for staff to enact their role as mediators to tutors. After all, tutors are students themselves who are in a learning process within the discipline of Psychology. In briefing tutors, staff tend not to understand and enact the role of mediator, neglecting to take tutors through the academic literacy tasks and processes in order that they can experience the mediation process between themselves and the lecturer. In the briefing sessions, tutors do not have the opportunity to become active participants in the academic literacy tasks and processes. If the staff members were to mediate during the briefing session, it would place the tutors in a better position to play the role of mediator in the tutorial programme.

Staff do not explicitly identify the briefing session as important. They assume that the tutors have knowledge which they do not necessarily have, and as a result the tutor just takes his understanding of the tutorial task to the tutorial. As tutors point out, they feel that they do not always have the knowledge required. The briefing session needs to be seen as a crucial link in the implementation of the tasks, where staff model the academic literacy processes necessary for task engagement. Staff need to plan the briefing session carefully, taking tutors through the academic literacy tasks set and the academic literacy processes required. Tutors need to be taken through the forty-five minute tutorial by the staff member running the tutorial. By assuming the role of tutor, the staff member is able to act as mediator to tutors, modelling the academic processes necessary for successful engagement in the task. The staff member needs to make the academic literacy processes explicit to tutors. Staff need to realise their important role as

mediators and that given the fact that the tutors are the primary mediators in implementing the tutorial programme, be able to act as mediators to the tutors, with the idea that this will be transferred to the students through the tutor. To avoid confusion, briefing sessions need to be held before each tutorial on a pre-determined day and at a pre-determined time. Staff need to have resolved issues of academic literacy for themselves. Regular meetings need to be set up where staff members have an opportunity to discuss and clarify issues of academic literacy and receive support. Staff need to assume a different role to the traditional role of disseminator of information. This means change for staff and support needs to be available.

### **8.5 Feedback to staff**

In terms of involvement in the tutorial programme, staff have limited responsibility and do not receive feedback or follow-up on the development of the intended skills within the tutorial programme. Currently, Psychology staff are not aware of what happens during tutorials or whether the skills intended to be developed are being developed or not. There needs to be meetings between staff, the programme coordinator and tutors in order for staff to obtain feedback from tutors about the implementation of their tasks and about how students are responding to the programme as a whole. This would ensure that necessary changes to the implementation of the programme as a whole and to individual tasks could be made timeously to ensure the development of the intended skills.

### **8.6 Role of a programme co-ordinator**

A programme coordinator can play an important role in ensuring the overall management of the

programme, including the continuous monitoring of the implementation of the programme. It is important though, for the coordinator to be actively involved in the programme and its implementation. The coordinator needs to meet with staff members, assist them in task design, attend each briefing session and attend tutorials on a regular basis. This will enable the coordinator to monitor the programme implementation as a whole. He also needs to monitor the tutoring of the programme and ensure relevant tutor training.

Staff also need to receive feedback about the implementation of their tasks. Currently staff are not aware of what happens during tutorials. There needs to be meetings between staff, the programme coordinator and tutors in order for staff to obtain feedback from tutors about the implementation of their tasks and about how students are responding to the programme as a whole.

## **9. A VISION OF ACADEMIC DEVELOPMENT**

To ensure the development of the academic literacy of students, Fischer and Van der Riet (1997) argue that there is a need for an academic development vision. Such a vision can assist in fostering the cooperation of a number of actors, including academic staff, students and tutors by providing a common purpose towards which the actors need to work (ibid). After all, as pointed out by Van der Riet, et al. (1996), academic development is a process in which a range of actors in different situations share responsibility for growing into academic life. It is important however, for these actors to be aware of and assume their responsibilities for the academic development of students. From the research findings, there is general awareness among the staff and tutors of academic development but they tend not to accept the responsibilities associated with the academic development of students.

The broad definition of academic literacy serves as the departmental vision of what it wants to achieve in terms of developing academic literacy within the discipline. Such a vision serves an important role in providing overall direction and purpose as highlighted by Potter (1996) and Fischer and Van der Riet (1997). Theoretically it should also serve to create an appropriate environment within the department where awareness of academic development is heightened among the actors and the actors work towards achieving the vision. Such an environment within an academic department is important if academic development is to be made a reality through the active creation and structuring of opportunities for the development of academic literacy. (See Kelly, 1955 for information on the importance of awareness). There needs to be action and commitment on the part of the actors to ensure the vision becomes a reality. As evident from the findings of this research, the mere existence of a vision does not ensure or guarantee informed awareness and action among staff.

Although the Department of Psychology has recorded its definition of academic development, academic literacy and the academic literacy skills to be developed at the first year in a policy document, these definitions and skills tend to remain implicit. It is not readily referred to or implied by staff. It is an understanding of academic development which has been developing over the last two years within the Department, but really came into being as a result of a specific academic development project which was conducted within the department of Psychology during 1995. The project identified the skills which students should develop during the different years within the discipline of Psychology, including the first year. It is these skills which are identified to be developed within first-year students. The project however was conducted by four staff members who were not involved in the teaching of the first year programme during 1997, except for one member who offered a short course at the end of the year which was not examinable. To

a large degree the 1997 tutorial programme adopted the list of skills identified by the research project. However, it is not clear as to whether the theoretical understanding underlying the development of the skills and outlined in the Departmental academic development policy is understood and readily accepted by those involved in the design and implementation of the programme, or by the first-year students. Although the philosophy is one of an integrated approach to the development of academic literacy, the deeper understanding tends to be lacking. This philosophy though, is not necessarily resisted. Staff indicate an awareness of the importance of academic development and the need to integrate it, but tend not to do so in practice. The lack of complete understanding could be an important factor in the different actors being able to be committed to developing the academic literacy of students and especially to understanding and enacting their role in the process of developing the academic literacy. The same applies to students who do not realise the rationale behind the programme and what is expected from them as students within the programme.

Students need to be signalled as to the academic skills they need to develop in tutorials. One way of doing this is for tutors to provide students with feedback as to the academic skills to be developed. A feedback form can be used such as the one designed by the researcher and implemented within the Department of Management at Rhodes University (Appendix 8). The feedback form provides the tutor with an opportunity to indicate to students how they are performing in relation to the relevant academic skills. The average mark obtained by each student is then either subtracted or added to the students overall class mark. The system is only introduced during the second term. The rationale is that students are provided with an opportunity to find their feet and become comfortable with each other and the tutor before the system is introduced. The Department of Management is then also provided with time to train

tutors in the use of the feedback form and to discuss the form and its use with the tutors and to implement any changes suggested by the tutors. The form was designed originally as a response to the problem of a lack of participation and preparation identified by tutors within the Department of Management.

## **10. NEED FOR TACTICAL STRATEGIES**

The Department of Psychology has the intention of developing the academic literacy of first-year students in an integrated and incremental manner and identifies the need for a departmental strategy. The identification of this need manifests itself in the existence of an academic development committee which has been set up to assume responsibility for reflecting on and motivating for adherence to the principles identified in the Academic Development policy as well as the existence of a tutorial programme.

Evident from the finding of this research is the difficulty of implementing academic development. This is especially the case given the lack of tactical plans for implementation which results in a lack of continuity in the programme and disorganisation. There is also very little in the literature on concrete guidelines as to how an integrated approach to the development of academic literacy should or can be implemented into mainstream teaching and learning. What is clear is the need to move away from the philosophical level to providing more concrete and apparent information on the implementation of an integrated approach to the development of academic literacy.

Clearly formulated strategies need to exist to operationalise the development of the identified

academic literacy skills. Although there exists an academic development vision of the development of academic literacy in the first-year tutorial programme, there is an absence of clearly formulated tactical strategies to guide and direct the operationalisation of the vision. The vision of academic literacy competencies tends to remain at the abstract level with a lack of a detailed programme design to achieve the development of the skills within the first year students. Also, the major courses of action or strategies that the Psychology Department needs to take to achieve the academic literacy goals at the first year level need to be jointly decided upon by staff involved in the programme to achieve the departmental academic literacy objectives. Such strategies present detailed guidelines in order to initiate and control action. They outline what to do, who will do it and how it will be done. The purpose of an action plan is to ensure that people responsible for accomplishing the goals have clear guidance on what they need to do and how they are to achieve the goals. Action plans also provide a mechanism by which the academic development committee and the programme coordinator can satisfy himself that what is being implemented is consistent with the intention of the strategic plans. At their simplest, action plans are lists of actions to be carried out by particular staff in order to achieve the requirements of their course. There is a need within the Department of Psychology to revisit their academic development strategy and formulate a detailed plan to operationalise the development of the academic development conceptualised.

As noted by Brophy and Alleman (1991), it is important that a plan be in place to achieve coherence and interrelatedness, where individual tutorial tasks are designed to form part of a broader plan to develop the academic literacy of students. Evident in the findings of the research is that the groupings of actors such as staff members, tutors and students all appear to act and do their “own thing” with an apparent lack of an integrated effort to develop the academic literacy

of students. Staff members tend not to work together in the overall development of academic literacy and are not aware of what skills the task preceding their task aimed to achieve or what the next task will aim to achieve. As a result, the idea of developing the literacy of students in an incremental manner where, as stated by Fisher and Van der Riet (1997), more and more academic literacy competencies are acquired with increasing levels of competency during the course, did not take place in the tutorial programme. The strategic importance of the design and implementation of tasks to contribute to the overall development of the pre-determined academic literacy skills is not grasped and acted upon by staff. There is no overall tactical plan which is explicitly available to guide staff in the design and implementation of individual tasks. There needs to be greater communication between the staff members who need to work as a team in approaching and developing the academic literacy of first year students. There needs to be regular communication between staff so that each staff member knows where they fit into the overall programme and where students are at in terms of their academic literacy development.

## **11. FURTHER RECOMMENDATIONS**

The researcher found that both staff and especially the tutors found the interviews and focus groups respectively to be useful in the sense that it provided them with an opportunity to express their ideas about the tutorial programme and to reflect on the programme and their role within the programme. Debriefing session with staff and tutors at the end of each semester could prove useful in assisting staff and tutors to reflect on their role in the tutorial programme and on what they are actually doing to develop academic literacy. Information emerging from such debriefing sessions could also be used in ensuring that the programme is being designed and implemented to develop the academic literacy of students.

The vision and philosophy of academic development within the department needs to be supported from the top by the Head of Department and resources made available to the tutorial programme, if staff commitment is to be achieved. It is not evident from the findings of the research whether staff are obliged to attend Academic Development Workshops, but as part of the staff development strategy, staff should be required to attend workshops offered by the Academic Development Centre on the Rhodes University campus. With the design and implementation of a Rhodes University performance appraisal system, the promotion of academic development within their discipline should be an important criteria of an academic staff member's appraisal. This would certainly improve awareness of the member's role in developing academic development and provide the staff member with valuable feedback on which to reflect and develop. Student evaluation of staff members also needs to include academic development criteria. From a departmental level there needs to be close liaison and continued research with the Rhodes University Academic Development Centre.

There is an additional need to perform a job analysis within the various disciplines at Rhodes in order to gain an understanding and accurate description of the job of an academic staff member. Such a job description should include academic development responsibilities. Research within the area of academic development within the various disciplines should also be encouraged and could form part of a University's overall research strategy.

Finally, the department of Psychology at Rhodes University recognises staff who contribute to academic development. An annual presentation of a departmental academic development award is made to a deserving staff member. This is one good idea to promote academic development and should be continued.

## 12. FURTHER RESEARCH

Research in the area of teaching and learning within the various disciplines is relevant and necessary in light of the new National Higher Education Quality Committee (NEQC). Here the emphasis is on institutional quality audits and quality teaching and learning in the context of an expanded and diverse system. Universities and particularly individual academic departments need to focus on, among others, the appropriateness and effectiveness of the teaching-and-learning process within their disciplines.

This research did not focus on summative evaluation where the outcome of the tutorial programme is evaluated. There is consequently scope for an evaluation of whether the programme is developing what it intends to develop. This study also did not utilise a pre-test post-test research design. Such a design may be useful in evaluating the outcome of the programme. A comparative study with other Departmental first year tutorial programmes at Rhodes and at other universities may also be useful. Research in this area does not have to be restricted to the first year level but can also be conducted at the second year level as well.

Important data needs to be gathered from students at all levels within the various disciplines about teaching and learning within the discipline. Academic staff need to understand their first-year students, not only the nature of the learning difficulties of these students but also to understand the academic experiences of students at the various levels within particular disciplines. At the end of 1997, the researcher embarked on a study to gather important data on first-year Management students. A 37-item questionnaire was designed and administered in order to collect data as to the extent to which certain areas such as reading, writing, using the

computer, accessing information and so on present problems to students while studying within the discipline. Data can also be accessed as to whether students are clear about what is expected of them in the different tasks and whether they feel they have the necessary skills to respond effectively. Such a questionnaire can be useful and is included in Appendix 9. The data from such a questionnaire can increase staff awareness of teaching and learning within their discipline and serve as valuable input into the development of strategies to improve the teaching-and-learning process. There is also the possibility of not only conducting research into the problems experienced by students studying different subjects during their first-year, but also research final-year student perceptions of the knowledge areas and skills gained within specific disciplines..

Academics are facing increasing pressure to focus upon and ensure quality teaching and learning within their disciplines, while at the same time they are expected to engage in and publish research findings in accredited journals. Academics should not pass up the opportunity of researching the teaching and learning process and outcomes within their disciplines. This would result in research output which at the same time would contribute to the quality teaching and learning. This suggestion does not however imply that academics should move away from research within their specific discipline as that is important in providing the current and informed content of the discipline.

### **13. SUMMATION**

The challenge to academics absorbed in each discipline within higher education is to determine and to define explicitly the academic literacy necessary for success within that specific discipline and to use the tutorial programme as the medium to develop the required literacy within students.

The Department of Psychology at Rhodes University did just that. Although the Department of Psychology has formulated a vision of what it wants to achieve at the first-year level in terms of developing academic literacy, it is important that the vision regarding the development of academic literacy at the first year level be understood and shared by all staff involved in the tutorial programme and put into practice. There is however no explicit and clear implementation strategy and no follow-up in monitoring the implementation of the vision. Strategies need to be developed for the attainment of the skills to be developed at each level. Staff also need to understand the theoretical background or rationale behind the development of academic literacy and their role as mediators in the process and not as providers of information. The development of the academic literacy of students needs to be a shared responsibility. All members need to understand and accept their responsibility in contributing to the development of academic literacy in students. The department needs to focus on developing such a shared responsibility. It is no good to merely have an academic development vision and a list of skills to be developed if there are no strategies in place to operationalise the vision. All staff members need to be involved in the formulation of the strategies. The mere existence of an academic development vision within a department will not guarantee the necessary contributions and cooperation of all actors involved in the programme.

## CHAPTER SIX

### CONCLUSION

Higher education is often challenged to develop effective and independent learners of students. These students though are (potentially) able to engage in and benefit from higher education. They do not necessarily lack the inherent abstract cognitive capability necessary for success in the higher education context (Piaget, 1853; Bruner, 1964; Vygotsky, 1978). Rather, they have not learnt to mobilise the particular cognitive processes that are required to deal with the problems typical of this context (Moll & Slonimsky, 1989).

The problems students need to be able to deal with in higher education are typically ill-structured in nature (Strohm Kitchener, 1983). Students need to learn to mobilise the appropriate cognitive processes to deal with these ill-structured problems by learning the groundrules of each discipline. These groundrules define what can be construed as knowledge as they relate not only to textual conventions but also to how a discipline poses and solves problems, how it conceives of and defines knowledge, what forms of explanation and argument are allowed, how new knowledge is produced and the ways in which what counts as knowledge within specific disciplines is explored and construed (Boughey, 1994). These groundrules form part of the culture (discourse or interpretive community) of each discipline. It is often the case that academic staff take the discourse of their discipline so for granted that it is never explicitly taught, but acquired by sustained involvement in the relevant cultural milieu.

The presence of student learning difficulties within higher education necessitates academic development work. The understanding of student learning difficulties outlined in this research

provides the theoretical support for an integrated approach to the development of the academic literacy of student. An integrated approach is where academic literacy is developed not as an adjunct “skill” but by and through engagement with learning in the mainstream disciplines themselves. Academic literacy is not so much a set of skills as it is a way of thinking and doing (Langer, 1987), implying that within higher education, students need to develop the way of thinking peculiar to the cultural milieu of each discipline. Students need to learn how to mobilise the necessary cognitive processes required for success in dealing with the ill-structured problems typical of a particular discipline.

With reference to the social and dialectical nature of learning (Vygotsky, 1978), the tutorial programme of a specific discipline is the ideal site for the integration of the development of academic literacy into a discipline. Tutorials are one of the sites where opportunities can be created for students to experience academic literacy tasks and processes and so learn to mobilise the relevant cognitive processes or to develop the necessary academic literacy.

During 1997, the first-year Psychology tutorial programme at Rhodes University, Grahamstown aimed at developing the academic literacy of first-year students. This research report is concerned with a programme evaluation of this 1997 first-year Psychology tutorial programme.

A qualitative research approach was followed. The research is guided by the ten stage evaluation model of education programmes outlined by Jacobs (1996) and an adapted version of the Context, Input, Process and Product approach to evaluation (Parlett and Hamilton cited in Calder, 1995, p.25) is used as part of Jacob’s model. Data was gathered from the sample using a variety of data gathering methods. A purposive sample of eight students were interviewed. The

tutorial programme co-ordinator and all eight but one staff member responsible for the design and implementation of tasks in the first-year Psychology tutorial programme were interviewed. Nine of the ten first-year Psychology tutors were included in focus group interviews. Observation of tutor briefing sessions and tutorials as well as documentary research was used. Data was analysed using qualitative data analysis techniques.

The findings of the research indicate the intention on the part of the psychology Department at Rhodes University to integrate the development of academic literacy into mainstream teaching at the first year level through the tutorial programme. The Department has conceptualised its understanding of academic development in a policy document as the development of academic, vocational and professional literacy. Academic literacy is also defined and conceptualised further in a list of pre-determined skills to be developed (reading, writing and general skills) incrementally from first year to the honours year. The conceptualisation of academic development tends to neglect to explicitly include the mobilisation of relevant cognitive processes, but there is awareness of the need to create a learning environment within which the skills can be developed and there is realisation that students need to understand the nature of Psychology as a discipline and that students need to live the subject. This is important as it indicates that the Department of Psychology realises that students need to understand the typical problems of the discipline as ill-structured in nature and that students need to be immersed in the discipline if they are to become successful members of the discipline.

At the first year level, the tutorial programme is the site for the development of the academic literacy of students. The role of staff and tutors within the programme is noted, together with the need for a Departmental strategy to implement the development of the academic literacy of

students. An academic development committee has been set up to assume responsibility for reflecting on and motivating for adherence to the principles in the Academic Development Policy.

The implementation of the academic development of students however tends to remain implicit. A lack of tactical strategies to implement academic development is evidence of the difficulty in moving from the philosophical level of academic development to the practical level. The programme is also perceived as disorganised and lacking in a co-ordinated or incremental development of the predetermined skills. Staff do not provide an accurate description of the academic skills to be developed as per the pre-determined list of skills in the policy documents and they tend not to consciously integrate the academic skills into the design of tutorial task. The sessions used to brief tutors as to the tutorial task tend to be ad hoc, neglecting to prepare tutors adequately for their role within the tutorials. Staff are not involved in the tutorial programme and do not receive feedback on the development of the academic skills within the programme. Tutors understand the learning difficulties of first year students and the idea of academic literacy. They encourage participation within tutorials and attempt to create a relaxed learning atmosphere which encourages participation and discussion. Students however are passive in their involvement and tutors tend to revert to tutor centered tutorials where the focus is upon the worksheets when there is a lack of response from the students. Staff, tutors and students all felt that the tutorial groups were too large for effective tutorials where students felt uninhibited to participate. There was also a feeling, especially among tutors and the majority of students that there were too few tutorials. During 1997, the tutorial programme for the first time attempted to implement the development of the academic literacy of students. It was evident from the findings of this research that there is much awareness among the actors in the

programme of academic development issues. This is evident from the ideas offered by the actors as to what needs to be done during 1998 to improve the first year tutorial programme in its effort to develop the academic literacy of students.

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**APPENDICES**

**Appendix 1**  
**Rhodes University**  
**Department of Psychology**  
**Academic Development Policy**

**Preamble**

Academic development (AD) is broadly defined as a concern with the development of academic literacy, professional literacy and vocational literacy.

Academic literacy is the set of competencies required to think critically, ask questions, communicate and access relevant resources within the discipline of psychology at the tertiary education level. Among these competencies are: the abilities to read complex texts, to communicate through writing, to attend and participate in lectures, to access and use resources including the library, computers and staff and peers, and to write examinations.

Professional literacy is the set of competencies required for professional practice. These include: having a knowledge of professional ethics, structures and networks and the legal and professional requirements to practise as a psychologist, possessing the competency to reflect on the role and function of psychology in society, and being able to behave ethically and pursue continuing education.

Vocational literacy is the set of competencies required for the application of psychology in a variety of contexts. These include: being aware of different vocational contexts and their demands and being able to match one's skills to them, and being able to apply psychological knowledge and skills in these different vocational settings.

**AD principles**

1. The optimisation of AD within the department, requires a Departmental strategy to provide direction, the leadership of the Head of Department as well as the commitment of all staff. It is recognised that the latter is contingent on the provision of the first two conditions.
2. AD should be seen as an integral part of teaching students that occurs within each year of study. As such, the department should be able to identify the level of academic, professional and vocational literacy expected of students within each year of study.
3. AD should not be seen as an add-on or something for disadvantaged students. Rather, it is something required of all students. It is recognised that some students may need academic support but this should be seen as separate from the pursuit of academic development.
4. It is recognised that the development of staff is critical to the success of the academic development of students, particularly in the acquisition of skills to deal with changing teaching requirements.

In this regard:

- The conditions under which staff teach are acknowledged and it is recognised that AD may often be perceived as a burden. However, given that AD is regarded as a necessity, the conditions for its existence need to be made possible. With the commitment of all staff, the responsibility of AD will be a shared responsibility and as such should not be burdensome.
  - Where possible, support should be given to lecturers to make the transition from current practices of teaching to the new practice of including AD in teaching.
  - The Department is committed to the development of its staff through the encouragement of staff to attend ADP seminars, through interest being shown in the teaching done by staff, through the mentorship programme as well as through the collaboration of staff in teaching, research and in writing articles for publication.
  - The commitment of staff to AD should be recognised by the Department as well as actively encouraged by the HOD.
5. The AD committee will assume responsibility for reflecting on and motivating for adherence to these principles. However, it should be recognised that academic development is not the sole responsibility of this committee but rather the collective responsibility of the staff of the Department.

**Appendix 2**  
**Rhodes University**  
**Department of Psychology**  
**Academic Development Curriculum per year**

**First Year**

Reading:

- to become familiar with accessing information in the library
- to be able to read and interpret basic texts

Writing:

- be able to understand the tasks inherent in assignment and test questions (relevance of information, understand directive of question - discuss, outline, contrast)
- be able to structure an essay (intro, body, conclusion)
- be able to offer a logical argument (sequence of thoughts in body of essay, differentiate different voices in text - that there are differing opinions, that own voice is different), coherence of argument
- be familiar with APA requirements

General:

- being aware of how psychology is different from other subjects
- being aware of the resources within the department (lecturers, tutors, peers, SI, video library) and building confidence with using them
- realising the importance of being interactive/participative in a variety of settings (lectures, tutorials, informal interactions) and taking responsibility for being active
- being able to manage being evaluated under examination conditions (studying for exams/tests as well as writing under these conditions)
- being able to respond effectively to feedback in its various forms (lecturers, tutors, peers, SI).

**Second Year**

Reading:

- to be familiar with accessing information in the library, prescribed and recommended
- be able to read and interpret more complex texts
- Be able to go beyond text book and access complex texts in an exploratory way (mastery is not expected but rather an awareness that other material exists and needs to be accessed, also a confidence to stretch themselves)

**Writing:**

- Be able to understand the tasks inherent in more complex assignment and test questions
- Be aware of different conceptual perspectives in different texts and to start to integrate these in their own writing (student needs to move beyond just providing information in response to question and rather deal with concepts or conceptual issues)
- Starting to become confident to argue for and support their own perspective based on the debates in psychology

**General:**

- Being able to ask psychological questions that differentiate the discipline from other subjects
- Be confident and familiar with resources with the department (lecturers, tutors, peers, SI, video library)
- Being interactive/participative in a variety of settings (lectures, tutorials, informal interaction) and taking responsibility for being active
- Knowing the requirements (information as well as literacy skills) of evaluation under examination conditions
- Becoming more aware of their own skills (presence and absence) in relation to the literacy requirements
- Being able to respond effectively to feedback in its various forms (lecturers, tutors, peers, SI) and seek it where necessary
- Be familiar with wordprocessing skills

**Third Year****Reading:**

- To begin to seek out reading matter beyond that prescribed and recommended and integrate it into course material
- To begin to utilise library resources such as CD-ROM, journals/periodicals
- Be able to read and critically interpret complex texts

**Writing:**

- Be able to understand the tasks inherent in complex assignment and test questions and meet these demands
- To integrate different conceptual perspectives from different texts with own writing (student needs to know concepts as well as start to work with them)
- To start to consider theoretical constructs covered in one course within the broader theoretical context of psychology
- To be confident to argue for and support their own perspective based on

### the debates in psychology

#### General:

- Be proactive in accessing resources within the department (lecturers, tutors, peers, SI, video library)
- Being aware of their own skills (presence and absence) in relation to the literacy (academic, professional, vocational) requirements
- Becoming familiar with the demands of psychology as a scientific discipline (learning research and assessment skills)
- Be familiar with the ethical code of psychology and its relationship to assessment and research
- To start to be able to appropriately apply knowledge within the discipline of psychology

### Honours

#### Readings:

- To actively seek out reading matter beyond that prescribed and recommended and integrate it into course material
- To be actively utilising library resources such as CD-ROM, journals/periodicals, abstracts

#### Writing:

- Continually reflecting on psychological material and beginning to contribute to an understanding of the body of psychological knowledge
- Demonstrating greater sophistication in critical abilities (actively looking for different voices in text, providing logical argument, integration of concepts)
- Demonstrating creativity and insight
- To consider theoretical constructs covered in one course with the broader theoretical context of psychology

#### General:

- Being familiar with the demands of psychology as a scientific discipline (learning research and assessment skills)
- To be able to appropriately apply knowledge within the discipline of psychology

**Appendix 3**  
**Rhodes University**  
**Department of Psychology**  
**Psychology I Syllabus (1997)**

**First Semester**

	Introductory lecture		Head of Department and Lecturer E
1.	Introduction to the Discipline and profession of Psychology*		Head of Department and Team
2.	Developmental Psychology	Tutorial	Lecturer A
3.	Brain and Behaviour	Tutorial	Lecturer B
4.	Personality Theory	Tutorial	Lecturer C
5.	Social Psychology		Lecturer D

**Second Semester**

6.	Abnormal Psychology	Tutorial	Lecturer E
7.	Motivation and Emotion	Tutorial	Lecturer F
8.	Learning and Memory	Tutorial	Lecturer G
9.	Intelligence, Language and Thought	Tutorial	Lecturer H
10.	Industrial Psychology	Tutorial	Lecturer I
11.	Psychology in Contemporary South Africa*		Lecturer J

- \* Introduction to the Discipline and Profession of Psychology and Psychology in Contemporary South Africa are not examinable.

**Appendix 4**  
**Interview schedule: student interviews**

1. The tutorial programme at the first-year level consists of a number of different tasks. Can you think of one which you found particularly interesting?
2. What made it interesting for you and why?
3. What was the purpose of this task?
4. Can you explain how you went about preparing and completing the task?
5. What hindered you in completing the task?
6. How does the way you approached this task differ from the way you approached the other tasks?
7. How did this task compare to the other tasks?
8. What is beneficial about tutorials?
9. What is not beneficial about tutorials?
10. Can you think of a tutorial you found particularly beneficial?
11. Can you explain what made it beneficial.
12. Can you think of a tutorial which was not very useful?
13. Can you explain why it was not so useful?
14. What is typically done in tutorials?
15. If you could change the tutorial programme at the first year level, what would you change?
16. Why would you change this?

**Appendix 5**  
**Interview schedule: co-ordinator interview**

1. Can you explain the aim of the tutorial programme at the first-year level?
2. Why does the programme aim to do this?
3. How does the programme achieve what it aims to do?

Structure

Process

4. Can you explain what worked in the programme?  
Why did it work?
5. Can you explain what didn't work in the programme?  
Why didn't it work?
6. What changes would you make to the programme next year?  
Why?

**Appendix 6**  
**Interview schedule: staff interview**

1. Can you describe the skills first-year students should have developed by the end of their first year in psychology
2. Can you describe what you do in the tutorial programme to develop these skills?
3. Can you describe the tutorial task you set?
4. What skills were you trying to develop with your task?
5. How does the task develop these skills?
6. What skills were developed?  
Why?
7. What skills were not developed?  
Why?
8. If you were to change the task for next year what changes would you make and why?

**Appendix 7**  
**Interview schedule: tutor focus group interviews**

1. What have you gained personally from tutoring this year?
2. Describe the skills first-year students should have at the end of their first-year?
3. How does the first-year student achieve or develop these skills?
4. What role does the tutorial programme play at the first-year level in developing these skills?
5. Is the role played by the tutorial programme successful in achieving these skill?  
  
When yes  
  
When no
6. What role does the tutor play in developing the skills?
7. Is the role of the tutors successful in developing these skills in first-year students?  
  
When yes  
  
When no
8. What do you as tutor actually do to develop these skills in first year students?
9. What hindered your actions as tutor during the course of this year?
10. What changes could be made to the programme to make it more beneficial in developing the required skills in students and why.

**Appendix 8**  
**Rhodes University**  
**Department of Management**  
**Management I Tutorial Evaluation Sheet**

***MANAGEMENT I TUTORIAL EVALUATION SHEET***

Student: \_\_\_\_\_

Tutor: \_\_\_\_\_

Course: \_\_\_\_\_

Tut No. \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Preparation**

- 3 No preparation
- 2 Minimum preparation
- 0 Adequate preparation
- 2 Well prepared

**Behaviour**

- 3 Disruptive
- 2 Unco operative
- 1 Co operative, contributing to success of tutorial

**Participation**

- 1 Does not participate at all
- 0 Participates, but adds little
- 1 Actively participates and adds to discussion

**Punctuality**

- 1 More than 5 minutes late
- 0 Arrived on time

**TOTAL MARK:**

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## Appendix 9

No. □□□

## MANAGEMENT LEARNING QUESTIONNAIRE

The aim of this questionnaire is to gather data about your learning experiences during the past year within the discipline of Management. The questionnaire is anonymous and the data will be used within the Department of Management to improve and develop teaching and learning.

When answering the questions, please ensure that your answers reflect your contact with the discipline of Management.

Please indicate your answer by placing a cross (X) in the applicable box on the *left side* of the page or, where required, by writing the number (1,2,3 etc.) indicating your rating.

Thank you for you co-operation!

Answer here ▼
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Office use only ▼
-------------------------

1. Gender:

	Male <sup>1</sup>	1	
	Female <sup>2</sup>		

2. Please indicate your racial background (This question is necessary for research purposes only):

	Black <sup>1</sup>	2	
	White <sup>2</sup>		
	Asian <sup>3</sup>		
	Coloured <sup>4</sup>		
	Other, please state <sup>5</sup> _____		

3. Year of study at a university:

	First <sup>1</sup>	3	
	Second <sup>2</sup>		
	Third <sup>3</sup>		
	Fourth <sup>4</sup>		
	Fifth or more <sup>5</sup>		

4. Indicate the grade you obtained in the June Management 101 exam:

First (75% or higher) <sup>1</sup>	4	
2A(70%-74%) <sup>2</sup>		
2B(60%-69%) <sup>3</sup>		
3(50%-59%) <sup>4</sup>		
F1(45-49%) <sup>5</sup>		
F2(30%-44%) <sup>6</sup>		
F3(below 30%) <sup>7</sup>		
Aegrotat <sup>8</sup>		

5. Did school prepare you adequately for the academic demands and expectations of University?

Yes, completely (Had to make no adjustments) <sup>1</sup>	5	
To a degree (Found myself having to adjust slightly in order to cope) <sup>2</sup>		
No, not at all (Had to make major adjustments in order to cope) <sup>3</sup>		
Still have not adjusted and am failing as a result <sup>4</sup>		

6. What is your home language?

English <sup>1</sup>	6	
Xhosa <sup>2</sup>		
Afrikaans <sup>3</sup>		
Sepedi <sup>4</sup>		
Venda <sup>5</sup>		
N Sesotho <sup>6</sup>		
S Sesotho <sup>7</sup>		
Zulu <sup>8</sup>		
Seswati <sup>9</sup>		
Tswana <sup>10</sup>		
Tsonga <sup>11</sup>		
Other, please state <sup>12</sup> _____		

7. Rate your proficiency in English along the following dimensions:

	Very good <sup>1</sup>	Good <sup>2</sup>	Poor <sup>3</sup>		
Understand				7	
Write				8	
Speak				9	

8. Rate each of the following according to the degree to which each presented a problem to you while studying within the discipline of Management. Use the scale provided below:  
Scale = no problem (1); a minor problem (2); a major problem (3)

Reading	10	
Writing	11	
Accessing information	12	
Recalling information	13	
Not understanding content	14	
Using a computer	15	
Not working hard enough (personal issue)	16	
Adjusting to university life	17	

9. Did you read the "Blue", Department of Management General information booklet?

Yes <sup>1</sup>	18	
No <sup>2</sup>		
Parts thereof <sup>3</sup>		

10. Are you familiar with what is expected of you in the following?

Exams:

Yes <sup>1</sup>	19	
No <sup>2</sup>		

Assignments:

Yes <sup>1</sup>	20	
No <sup>2</sup>		

Tests:

	Yes <sup>1</sup>	21	
	No <sup>2</sup>		

Tutorials:

	Yes <sup>1</sup>	22	
	No <sup>2</sup>		

11. Do lecturers make the expectations of the different tasks explicit?

	Yes <sup>1</sup>	23	
	No <sup>2</sup>		
	Only some lecturers do <sup>3</sup>		

12. Do you understand the criteria used to assess assignments?

	Yes <sup>1</sup>	24	
	No <sup>2</sup>		
	Partially <sup>3</sup>		

13. Each of the following represents criteria which can be used to assess written assignments. By using the scale provided, rate each according to your perception of its importance:  
Scale = not important (1); important (2); very important (3)

	Has the assignment successfully covered all aspects of the question?	25	
	Does the assignment show that the student has read widely and thoroughly in the field of the assignment?	26	
	Does the assignment demonstrate a sound theoretical understanding of the topic?	27	
	Has the student developed the argument in an orderly, logical manner?	28	
	Is the language used in the assignment clear and grammatically correct?	29	
	Is the assignment well presented in terms of the following factors: layout and spacing; subtitles and paragraphs; spelling and legible handwriting/typed?	30	
	Is there evidence of originality in the assignment?	31	

14. Do you know how to reference correctly in a Management assignment?

	Yes <sup>1</sup>	32	
	No <sup>2</sup>		

15. Do you use the feedback provided to you to improve upon you assignments?

Yes <sup>1</sup>	33	
No <sup>2</sup>		

16. Do you find the feedback provided with your assignments valuable?

Yes <sup>1</sup>	34	
No <sup>2</sup>		

17. Do you know how to analyse and respond to a case study effectively?

Yes <sup>1</sup>	35	
No <sup>2</sup>		

18. Do you feel you have the necessary skills to respond as required to the different expectations of written tasks as required by the different instructions/terms used (eg. critically discuss, analyse, compare and contrast, etc)?

Yes <sup>1</sup>	36	
No <sup>2</sup>		

19. The following represents possible teaching objectives. Rate each according to the importance you think the Department attaches to each by using the scale provided below:  
Scale = not important (1); important (2); very important (3)

Knowledge (The ability to recall what has been learned)	37	
Comprehension (The ability to show that learned material is understood)	38	
Application (The ability to use learned material in a new or novel task)	39	
Analysis (The ability to break up information logically into its composite parts)	40	
Synthesis (The ability to structure a situation of information to form a new pattern or whole)	41	
Evaluation (The ability to evaluate the worth of material, theories, methods, information, etc. for a given purpose)	42	

20. Are you provided with enough opportunities to apply the theory of Management?

Yes <sup>1</sup>	43	
No <sup>2</sup>		
Uncertain <sup>3</sup>		

21. Do you find tutorials assist you in your learning?

Yes <sup>1</sup>	44	
No <sup>2</sup>		

Explain:

-----  
 -----  
 -----

22. How could the tutorial better assist you in learning in the discipline of Management?

-----  
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23. Do you agree that your contribution/participation in tutorials should be assessed to contribute to your year mark?

Yes <sup>1</sup>	45	
No <sup>2</sup>		

24. Do you have a personal copy of the prescribed texts for Management I (101 and 102)?

Yes, all the prescribed texts <sup>1</sup>	46	
No, none of the prescribed texts <sup>2</sup>		
One or two (some) of the prescribed texts <sup>3</sup>		

25. How often do you read the prescribed text?

Never <sup>1</sup>	47	
Seldom, an hour or two a term <sup>2</sup>		
One hour per week <sup>3</sup>		
Five hours a week <sup>4</sup>		
More than five hours a week <sup>5</sup>		

26. Do you read any other relevant Management material, other than the prescribed textbooks?

Never <sup>1</sup>	48	
Hardly ever <sup>2</sup>		
Sometimes <sup>3</sup>		
Normally <sup>4</sup>		
Always <sup>5</sup>		

27. How would you rate your reading skills?

	Very poor <sup>1</sup>	49	
	Poor <sup>2</sup>		
	Satisfactory <sup>3</sup>		
	Good <sup>4</sup>		
	Very good <sup>5</sup>		

28. Identify (by placing a cross next to the relevant factor/s) which of the following presented problems to you while *reading* within the discipline of Management:

	Do not understand what I read <sup>1</sup>	50	
	Read too slowly <sup>1</sup>	51	
	Can't maintain concentration <sup>1</sup>	52	
	Can't summarise what I read <sup>1</sup>	53	
	Don't know the most important aspects of what I read <sup>1</sup>	54	
	Can't remember what I read <sup>1</sup>	55	
	Not motivated to read <sup>1</sup>	56	
	None of the above <sup>1</sup>	57	

29. Identify (by placing a cross next to the relevant factor/s) which of the following presented problems to you while *writing assignments* within the discipline of Management:

	Understanding the topic and knowing what is required <sup>1</sup>	58	
	Accessing (finding) the information for the assignment <sup>1</sup>	59	
	Knowing which information is relevant <sup>1</sup>	60	
	Integrating the relevant information <sup>1</sup>	61	
	Understanding the information in relation to the topic <sup>1</sup>	62	
	Referencing <sup>1</sup>	63	
	Providing relevant practical examples <sup>1</sup>	64	
	Writing the introduction <sup>1</sup>	65	
	Writing the conclusion <sup>1</sup>	66	
	Writing clearly and grammatically <sup>1</sup>	67	
	Developing a logical argument (structuring the assignment) <sup>1</sup>	68	
	None of the above <sup>1</sup>	69	

30. Do you know how to use the library effectively to access information?

Yes <sup>1</sup>	70	
No <sup>2</sup>		
Can improve my ability to use the library <sup>3</sup>		

31. Which of the following library services have you used in the discipline of Management? Indicate by placing a cross in the relevant box/s:

Short loan <sup>1</sup>	71	
OPAC library computers <sup>1</sup>	72	
Journal/Periodical section <sup>1</sup>	73	
CD-Rom disks <sup>1</sup>	74	
Main library (Book section upstairs) <sup>1</sup>	75	
Reference section <sup>1</sup>	76	

32. Indicate your level of expertise in the following computer packages:

	Very good <sup>1</sup>	Good <sup>2</sup>	Poor <sup>3</sup>		
Wordprocessing (eg: WordPerfect)				77	
Graphics (eg: WordPerfect Presentations)				78	
Spreadsheet (eg: QuattroPro)				79	
Internet				80	
E-mail (Pegasus Mail)				81	
Statistical Packages (eg: Statgraphica)				82	

33. What should the role of the lecturer be? Rank the following from that which you feel is most characteristic (1) of the lecturer's role to that which is least characteristic (4):

To provide information	83	
To structure the information in an area	84	
To motivate students to learn	85	
To challenge student's thinking	86	

34. How do you feel about working in groups, where the mark allocated depends on the final group product?

	Strongly dislike <sup>1</sup>	87	
	Dislike <sup>2</sup>		
	Indifferent <sup>3</sup>		
	Good idea <sup>4</sup>		
	Very good idea <sup>5</sup>		

35. How often do you attend Management lectures?

	Always (every lecture) <sup>1</sup>	88	
	Mostly (miss between one and two lectures a term) <sup>2</sup>		
	Seldom (miss at least one lecture a week) <sup>3</sup>		
	Hardly ever (miss weeks of lectures at a time) <sup>4</sup>		

If you miss lectures, briefly state the reason:

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36. Why are you taking Management as a subject?

	To gain a credit <sup>1</sup>	89	
	Plan to major in Management <sup>2</sup>		
	Plan to major in Management and use it in my planned career <sup>3</sup>		

37. Indicate your overall impression of your studies in the discipline:

	Positive <sup>1</sup>	90	
	Negative <sup>2</sup>		
	Indifferent <sup>3</sup>		

Explain why:

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If there are any further comments/information you would like to provide, please record below:

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**THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME**