

CHAPTER TWO

A MEDIATIONAL APPROACH TO TEACHING AND LEARNING

2.1 INTRODUCTION

*You teach science; well and good.
I am busy fashioning the tools for its acquisition...
It is not your business to teach him the various sciences, but to give him a
taste for them and methods of learning them when this taste is more mature.*

- Rousseau (in Blagg, 1991:1)

It is evident from this quotation that information can only be successfully transmitted to a recipient if educators use their skills and tools effectively in doing so. Merely transmitting subject content is of minute value if the recipient does not interact with the learning content. It is essential that educators realize and act out their responsibility towards learners by not solely being a transmitter of knowledge, but rather by being a mediator.

Du Plessis *et al.* (2007:15) summarise the change from a traditional perception of teaching into a mediation perspective as the way in which learning should be seen. According to these authors, learning should be seen as a change in the meaning which we attach to something. The authors emphasize that the skills which learners are taught (for example, problem-solving and research) are just as important as the learning contents, if not more so.

In this chapter, the researcher will report on a variety of literature sources in order to reflect well on the existing research on mediation. Firstly, the historical perspectives on the development of mediation (*cf.* 2.3) will be studied. Here, emphasis will be put on the perspectives of Piaget (*cf.* 2.3.1), Vygotsky (*cf.* 2.3.2) and Nyborg (*cf.* 2.3.3); Neo Piagetian approaches (*cf.* 2.3.4); and Feuerstein (*cf.* 2.3.5). The twelve criteria that characterize mediation will be focused on (*cf.* 2.5). Hereafter, the researcher will investigate the present perspectives on mediation (*cf.* 2.3.6) by clarifying the concept *mediation* (*cf.* 2.2).

The allusion to and impact of mediation in the classroom (*cf.* 2.4) will provide a clear perspective on how mediation is implemented in modern classrooms. The task of a mediator (*cf.* 2.2.1) will show what is expected of educators while the influence of mediation on language (*cf.* 2.6; 2.7) will focus more on how mediation applies to the subject, English (*cf.* 1.1; 1.5.2; 1.7).

2.2 MEDIATION: A CONCEPT CLARIFICATION

Some of the words which are given by the computer's thesaurus as synonyms of mediator include the following: go-between, negotiator, diplomat, peacemaker, referee, umpire and moderator. All these words support the notion of intervention with a view to facilitate actively, or discourse to ensure a desirable outcome. In other words, an educator is expected to play an enabling role to ensure that the learning task is successful within the given learning context (Vakalisa, 2004:25).

As pointed out by Fraser (2006:1), on account of its proven ineffectiveness, the traditional role of the educator has long since served its function. As an Outcomes-Based teaching approach and the newly implemented CAPS are currently followed in South Africa, and since learners are expected to take responsibility for their own learning and to be independent, the educators of today have to forget about their traditional approach and accept the role as mediator of learning (Fraser, 2006:1). Although this is Fraser's perspective of the educator's role, many other perspectives should be taken into consideration than merely suggesting that the traditional role of an educator has been served.

The researcher supports Fraser's point of view that the former traditional role that the educator served in the education process should not be seen as the only view and teaching method in the classroom. Learners, parents and the community should accept their responsibility in the teaching-partnership which comprises of much more than merely the educator and the subject content.

The role of mediator expects the educator to help learners to bridge the gap between what they cannot do on their own at a given time to what they can do with a little help from someone else. This implies that the educator should

intentionally intervene and direct learners in the learning process, but should not tell them what to think.

According to Greenberg and Fickeisen (2009:1), learning, which begins before birth, becomes ever more important as the velocity of change accelerates around us. Whether it involves learning how to better influence the future, or developing the needed skills for earning an income, learning can be empowering, enjoyable, and revitalizing – or it can be provoking and daunting – depending on your skills in learning.

Children are seen as being self-motivated, active learners who think qualitatively differently from adults and whose development is influenced by environmental experience such as the quality of family and school life (Light, Sheldon & Woodhead, 1991:17). According to Du Plessis *et al.* (2007:15), the reason why an educator these days needs to be a learning mediator and not merely a traditional transmitter of information or learning content is that since the 1980s a more holistic approach to education has taken form. It is imperative to bear in mind that a holistic approach entails the cognitive, social, and emotional development of a child (Du Plessis *et al.*, 2007:15). A holistic approach is feasible by applying mediation in the classroom when the educator motivates learners to give their own opinions on matters arising, share some of their own life experiences to contribute to learning content and enrich lessons and encourage learners to interact in groups (Light *et al.*, 1991:17).

Learning to think is surely what education is all about. As argued by Cowley (2004:1), educators have the vital task of helping learners understand how to think efficiently, and showing them how they can best utilize their astounding brains.

At the beginning of the 20th century, the study skills movement flirted with the idea of teaching learning techniques in a variety of books. Intuitive ideas of many years ago have assumed the status of enduring truths without any theoretical or empirical basis (Blagg, 1991:1-2). According to Du Plessis *et al.* (2007:15), it was soon discovered that learning should not be a passive

process, but rather an active one. Learning is individualized and social; it takes place in a specific environment; and knowledge is obtained by means of the active construction and reconstruction of meaning (Du Plessis *et al.*, 2007:15). Learning, therefore, is a procedure during which knowledge is constructed on the foundation of the information received.

In the opinion of Blagg (1991:2), more promising lines of approach are now beginning to appear in the developmental/cognitive psychology fields, although ironically, earlier ideas about intelligence and learning hindered serious attempts to teach cognitive skills. For most of the 20th century, the school curriculum had been powerfully influenced by Piagetian theory, psychometrics and behaviourism (Blagg, 1991:2).

While mediating learning, educators should be sensitive to the diverse needs of the learners, acclimatize their teaching strategies to learners' needs and shortcomings, use the medium of teaching efficiently and create a learner-friendly milieu and classroom climate. Consequently, educators are required to have a sound knowledge of their learning area and to be an inspiration to their learners (Fraser, 2006:1).

Advocating for a mediational approach to teaching and learning requires an analysis of the work of pioneers in this field to provide a point of departure for this study.

2.2.1 The task of a mediator of learning

The word mediator is derived from the Greek *mesites*, which means to *intervene between parties* (Fraser, 2006:5). Teaching ought to be a type of social transaction between the learner and the educator, with the educator mediating the learning experiences. The mediation procedure involves structuring activities to enable the learner gradually to gain conscious control over the real-life activities and problems that are set and that need to be solved (Du Plessis *et al.*, 2007:9).

Feuerstein *et al.* (1994:7) define mediated learning experience as a quality of interaction between the organism and its environment. This quality is

guaranteed by the interposition of an initiated, deliberate human being who mediates the stimuli imposing on the organism.

A mediator is usually a neutral person who has to solve a dispute between two conflicting parties with diverse points of view. The mediator is, therefore, obviously expected to act as an intermediary, to be able to communicate effectively, solve conflict, show understanding for diversity and to effect change (Fraser, 2006:5).

Rand and Tannenbaum (2000:84) are of the opinion that a mediator is an individual who has both ability and dedication to help others shape, frame, understand and appreciate their surroundings more insightfully and independently. The mediator can facilitate personal change, and may generate diversity among those who undergo that process of change.

The role of *learning mediator* implies taking learners through learning materials in a way that maximizes learning (Vakalisa, 2004:26).

According to Hadji (2000:29), mediators play a major role in interaction. It is they who orient the environment/individual dialectic and this is why social interaction plays a very important *formative* function in human development. The mediator is animated by specific intentionality which is the first criteria of mediation. The main intention of the mediator is to equip the mediatee with the essential requisites for success in the learning tasks. Linked to social interaction, Fraser (2006:5) mentions the importance of communication. Educators must effect communication between the learners and their environment, their fellow learners and the learning contents or subject matter (Fraser, 2006:5).

For this study the researcher argued that the educator can no longer just simply transfer learning content to learners and suggest that their role had been fulfilled. Mediation involves the educator walking the extra mile in order to aid learners to apply subject content in their lives, the world and share their meaning-making of subject content with others – not only for their own enrichment, but also to the advantage of fellow learners. It is important to realize that educators have an obligation to apply mediation in learning.

Should this be done effectively, many advantages may be the result, such as more effective learning.

Looking back on the description of the word *mediator* (*cf.* 1.1), the mediator is usually a neutral person who, by creating a win-win situation through communication, has to solve a dispute between two conflicting parties who hold diverse points of view (Fraser, 2006:5).

A mediator is someone who can perform as intermediary, facilitate dialogue, communicate well, and make it easy for other people to communicate their own ideas or feelings (Du Plessis *et al.*, 2007:14). Fraser (2006:1) emphasizes that the role of mediator expects an educator to assist learners to bridge the fissure between what they cannot do on their own at a given time to what they can do with a little aid from someone else. This implies that the educator should intentionally intervene and direct learners in the learning process, but should not tell them what to think.

Fraser (2006:5) and Du Plessis *et al.* (2007:14) are of the opinion that a learning mediator should not produce the answers to problems, but should rather offer learners the opportunity to think out possible solutions for themselves. They should also get learners to see that a problem has more than one solution and those alternatives and possibilities should also be explored. Boulle and Rycroft (2007:13) argue that mediation can directly and indirectly train the learners in a method and style of decision-making that can be used in their future. Where successful, it can develop the learner's confidence in managing their own affairs in life.

Mediators in education should ask themselves how they can teach in such a way that their learners get involved, and how they can adjust their teaching so that their learners become independent learners who take responsibility for their own learning (Du Plessis *et al.*, 2007:14). Feuerstein *et al.* (2010:38) express an imperative characteristic of the mediated interaction: mediation is not automatically verbal or language dependent. It is, however, *intentional* – that is, the mediator wants it to happen and does things to bring it to the mediatee.

Karpov (2003:46) reminds the reader that mediation begins with an adult involving children in the course of shared activity, with the objective of solving a problem. Effectively, the educator provides for the learners a kind of mental template or model that will make it possible for them to solve the problem. Initially, the learners apply their new mental instrument under the supervision of the educator. Gradually, the educator should pass greater responsibility to the learner.

Smidt (2009:22) is of the opinion that mediation refers to the use of cultural tools or symbols to bring about qualitative changes in thinking. She talks of mediation as the use of *communicable systems* for representing reality as well as for acting on it.

Another important responsibility of the educator as mediator is to bring about change. Change should be in individual insight, behaviour, perception or motivation and ought to lead to increased knowledge or the ability to do something not done before. Learning has taken place if the learner knows something or can do something he or she did not know or could not do before. In the mediation of learning it is imperative that the learner should be aware of the nature, value and importance of this change (learning) that has taken place (Fraser, 2006:6).

According to Egan and Gajdamaschko (2004:83), there are three traditional conceptions of the educator's task:

- The first conception of the educator's task is to engage the young learner in what is called an apprenticeship relationship with a specialist. The learner would learn by doing with a specialist on hand to direct and correct him.
- The second conception is that of coding. The conception of education that derived from accumulation of coded knowledge was one in which the task was to teach as much of certain forms of knowledge as possible.
- The third conception of the educator's task grew out of the recognition that just accumulating knowledge did not always produce an adequate kind of

person. The secret lies in the underlying process of mental development. Educators were persuaded to see their duty as supporting the development of this internal developmental process.

It is thus inevitable to realize that change is necessary in traditional perspectives of teaching. No longer can the educator see himself as mere provider of knowledge, but rather as intermediate between the learning content and learner to aid the learner into interaction with the learning content and real life.

The following visual summary reflects the researcher’s synthesis of what the task of mediator entails.

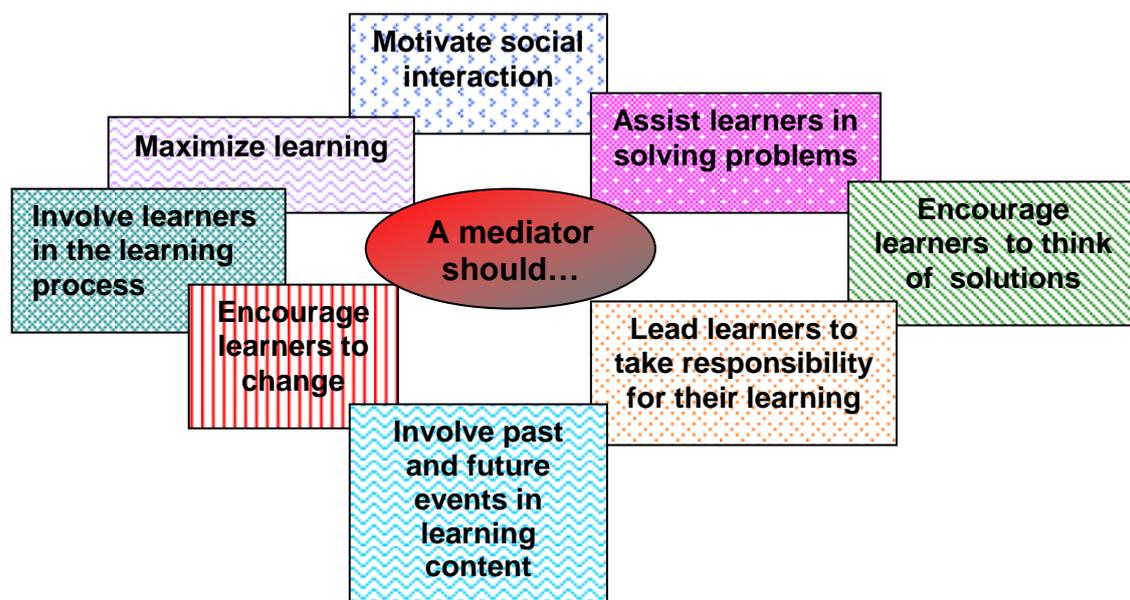


Figure 2.1: Visual summary of what the task of mediator entails

In order to understand how the meaning of the concept mediator of learning evolved, a brief account of the historical perspectives on the development of mediation follows in the next section.

2.3 HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF MEDIATION

According to Kozulin (2004:16), for a long time, children were perceived as containers that must be crammed with information and skills by educators.

This resulted in learners ending up as inert recipients of pre-packed knowledge. In time, it was expected that learners should be autonomous agents of acquisition (Kozulin, 2004:16).

Blagg (1991:1) mentions that the idea of teaching children to be superior learners is not novel. It was debated by Socrates and Plato and has been espoused by educationalists and philosophers throughout the centuries. Teaching children how to become more superior learners has featured as a central, coordinated curricular endeavour at our schools since 1997 (Department of Education, 2002:7-10).

In this study, a variety of perspectives will be given to illustrate the development of a mediational approach to teaching.

2.3.1 The Piagetian perspective

According to Kalantzis and Cope (2008:148), Jean Piaget was a leading exponent of a theory of brain developmentalism that is frequently called *Constructivism*. As argued by Piaget, learning takes place through processes of assimilation, in which things perceived in the external of the social world fit into the existing conceptual structure of the internal mental world, and through accommodation, by means of which the internal or mental world transforms itself in reaction to things perceived (Kalantzis & Cope, 2008:148).

Du Plessis *et al.* (2007:4-5) mention that Piaget's theory lies at the heart of Constructivism, which views cognitive development as a process in which learners actively build systems of meaning and understanding or reality through their individual experiences and interactions.

In the opinion of Light *et al.* (1991:19), Piaget saw children as vigorously constructing their own progress, through their interactions with the environments. Children should be given *concrete experiences* because they ought to be able to *discover* things for themselves. Within this view, the educators' function becomes a rather indirect one in which they supply the learner with the finest experience and environment to encourage the natural capability to develop and learn (Light *et al.*, 1991:19). According to Du Plessis

et al. (2007:15), this contrasts with the view that learning means that the learners should take in and memorize the information that somebody gives them.

Du Plessis *et al.* (2007:4) point out that some important educational implications of Piaget's theory are the following:

- Educators need to focus on the process of learners' thinking, and not only
- on the product. Educators should understand the process learners use to get to their answers and how they solve problems.
- Learners should be actively involved in learning activities and learn best when they are encouraged to discover for themselves through interaction with their environment.

As pointed out by Blagg (1991:2) and Mwamwenda (2005:84-95), Piaget's pioneering work on the child's emerging cognitive capabilities emphasized important stages in conceptual development. During the first stage, dominated by sensory motor experiences, the baby develops an identity separate from the rest of the world. Later, the infant establishes object permanence and conservations of number, shape, volume, and so on. The child begins to build up a comprehensive and predictable model of the world, which eventually enables abstract, hypothetical thinking (Blagg, 1991:2; Mwamwenda, 2005:84-95). According to Smidt (2009:60), it is thus of little use to explain things verbally to young children before they are at the right stage of development to comprehend the ideas behind the explanation.

As pointed out by Feuerstein (1980:8), Piaget's theory has demonstrated that the heart of intelligence lies not in its measured creation, but in its active construction by the individual. This implies that the educator should deliberately mediate and direct learners in the learning process and should not tell them what to think. (Fraser, 2006:1). Learning, therefore, is a process during which the learner constructs his or her own understanding and knowledge of the world on the basis of information received, through

experience and reflection on experiences, rather than the meagre amalgamation of information that is passed on (Fraser, 2006:6).

Piagetian theory has shaped the field of Teaching and Learning in remarkable ways. It gives an explanation of cognitive processes which is still influential and is in certain respects probably basically accurate, needing mainly testing and specification (Meadows, 1993:198). Smidt (2009:59) is of the opinion that Piaget's work has been influential in many Western education systems and has contributed greatly to our understanding of learning and development, but Piaget's theories do not take noteworthy account of a child's social environment, and for him the position of the adult is primarily the choice of activities and resources.

According to Blagg (1991:1), Piaget regarded cognitive development as an essential prerequisite for learning rather than a result of educational experience. For him, the child's unfolding reasoning abilities were largely biologically determined and the role and importance of social interface in cognitive development was neglected (Blagg, 1991:2). According to Karpov (2003:47), Piaget attributes central importance to children's self-governing activity oriented towards the mastery of their physical environment. In contrast to this, the followers of Vygotsky accentuate the role of children's activity as mediated by adults and peers, in other words, activity that is oriented towards the mastery of the world of human culture (Karpov, 2003:47).

Falik (2000:314) noted that Piaget imposed a more cognitive focus on the process of direct learning. Direct learning is characterized by behavioural psychologists as S – R (stimulus and response), which exposes the individual to stimuli which produce changes in behaviour and learning. Piaget added an **O** to the schema, representing the organism upon which the stimuli acts and from whom responses are generated. In direct learning, the stimuli impose themselves directly on the organism and the organism reacts (Falik, 2000:314).



Figure 2.2: The Piagetian model of mediation (Falik, 2000:314)

At the core of Piaget's model is the thought that cognition is one form of the adaptation between organism and environment which is seen throughout the living world (Meadows, 1993:199).

Unfortunately, as pointed out by Blagg (1991:4), the Piagetian approach overlooked the vital role of social interaction in learning and development. While language, for Piaget, is clearly a symbolic system for representing the world, it is rather separate from the actions which lead to reasoning and the development of logical thinking (Smidt, 2009:59-60).

The meditative value of human intervention is not regarded by Piaget as necessary to the cognitive development of the child but, rather, as a direct source of stimulation that does not vary essentially from other sources located in the immediately experienced space and time of the individual (Feuerstein, 1980:16).

2.3.2 The Vygotskian perspective

Berk and Winsler (2002:12) mention that the Vygotskian perspective is exceptional in that thinking is not bounded by the individual brain or mind. Instead, the *mind extends beyond the skin* and is inseparably joined with other minds. According to Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory, cognition is a profoundly social phenomenon. Social experience shapes the ways of thinking and interpreting the world accessible to individuals. Language plays a crucial role in a socially formed mind because it is our primary way of communication and mental contact with others, serves as the major means by which social experience is represented psychologically and is an indispensable tool for thought (Berk & Winsler, 2002:12).

According to Karpov (2003:46), it is essential to bear in mind that the concept of mediation is the central concept in Vygotsky's theory of child development. According to Vygotsky, all human mental processes are mediated by tools, but these are special, psychological tools, such as language, signs and symbols. Humans are not born with these tools. These tools are invented by human society. Having been acquired and internalized, these tools come to mediate children's mental processes. Vygotsky called human mental processes that are mediated by tools, higher mental processes (Karpov, 2003:46).

According to Du Plessis *et al.* (2007:9), Vygotsky, in his learning theories, emphasized the following aspects:

- Social, cultural and historical influences on learning and cognitive development
- The relationship during thinking (cognition) and language
- Assisted learning: how, with the help of, for example educators, children can learn more.

John-Steiner and Soubberman (1978:124) noted that a key concept that Vygotsky proposed to represent interaction, is the functional learning system. Vygotsky recognized that functional systems are rooted in the most basic adaptive responses of the organism, such as unconditioned and conditioned reflexes. These are formed during each individual's development and are reliant upon the social experiences of the child (John-Steiner & Soubberman, 1978:124). According to Vasta, Haith and Miller (1995:1), Vygotsky saw intellectual abilities as being more precise to the culture in which the child was reared. Culture makes two sorts of contributions to the child's intellectual development. First, by children attain much more of their thinking (knowledge) from it. Second, by children attain the processes or means of their thinking (tools of intellectual adaptation) from the surrounding culture. Therefore, culture provides the children with the means to think, what to think and how to think.

According to Kalantzis and Cope (2008:148), Vygotsky describes children's conversion from what he calls *complex* to *conceptual* thinking through the social process of language attainment.

Vygotsky often referred to a term that has been translated as *mediation*. Occasionally this term is accompanied by a figure depicting a stimulus, a response, and a *mediating link* (S-X-R) amid them (Vygotsky, 1978:13).



Figure 2.3: Vygotsky's model of mediation (Vygotsky, 1978:13)

As pointed out by Berk and Winsler (2002:5), Vygotsky's theory is often referred to as the socio-cultural approach, since it is an effort to understand how social and cultural influences influence children's development. Vygotsky's theory draws on meaningful similarities and differences among four different levels of human development (Berk & Winsler, 2002:5):

- The development of the human species through evolution (phylogenesis)
- The development of humans throughout history
- The development of the individual through childhood and adulthood (ontogenesis)
- The development of competence at a single task or activity by a child or adult (microgenesis).

Vasta *et al.* (1995:1) point out that Vygotsky incorporates certain elements in his model of human development that has been termed a socio-cultural approach. For him, the individual's development is an outcome of his/her culture. Development, in Vygotsky's theory, applies mainly to mental development, such as thought, language and the reasoning process. These abilities were understood to expand through social interactions with others

and therefore represented the shared knowledge of the culture (Vasta *et al.*, 1995:1).

At the heart of development is one of the most important concepts in Vygotskian theory: *internalization*. Vygotsky emphasized a close and complex relationship between external social processes and internal psychological ones. Vygotsky's theory has as its centre the concept of mediation, the use of psychological *tools* or *signs*, which allows a qualitative change in mental or socio-historical life. Mediation is at the heart of cognitive processes (Meadows, 2003:243).

According to Vygotsky, every child's cultural development appears twice: first, between people (interpsychological) and then within him/herself (intrapsychological). This applies evenly to voluntary attention, to logical memory and to the formation of ideas. All the higher cognitive functions originate as actual relationships between individuals (Vygotsky, 1978:57).

Vygotsky viewed cognitive development as an outcome of a dialectical process where the child learns through shared problem-solving experiences with someone else, such as parents, educators, siblings or peers (Vasta *et al.*, 1995:1). Originally, the person interacting with the child undertakes most of the responsibility for guiding the problem-solving, but progressively this responsibility transfers to the child (Vasta *et al.*, 1995:1).

Assisted performance also stands central to Vygotsky's approach. Assisted performance defines what a child can do with aid, with the support of the environment, of others, and of the self. For Vygotsky, the contrast between assisted performances identified the fundamental nexus of development and learning that he named the *zone of proximal development* (ZPD) (Light *et al.*, 1991:45; Parke & Gauvain, 2009:298-299).

It is Chaiklin (2003:39-41) who points out that Vygotsky talked about the necessity to identify the child's zone of proximal development, which he defined as the *distance between the actual (mental) developmental level* which would be established by *independent problem-solving* and *the level of potential (mental) development* which would be established by *problem-*

solving that arises under adult supervision or during *teamwork with more capable peers*.

According to Du Plessis *et al.* (2007:9), Vygotsky argued that every learner also has a possible zone of development. This is the zone that represents tasks that a learner has not yet accomplished, but is competent of learning or doing. As the learner develops into self-regulation, the support will diminish and move further into the zone until, eventually, the learner can take full responsibility for his or her own learning and development.

The phrase zone of proximal development refers to the breach that exists for a given child at a particular time between his/her level of performance on a given task or activity and his/her potential level of ability following instruction (Light *et al.*, 1991:101).

It is imperative to remember that Vygotsky was not a stimulus-response learning theorist and did not propose his idea of mediated behaviour to be thought of in this context. What he did intend to convey by this notion was that in higher forms of human behaviour, the individual modifies the stimulus situation as a part of the process of responding to it (Vygotsky, 1978:14).

Berk and Winsler (2002:20) mention that a unique trait of Vygotsky's theory is that a social perspective pervades even those circumstances in which children and adults appear to be involved in private cognitive activity – alone in a room reading a book, drawing a picture, solving a puzzle, ruminating on a past event, or daydreaming. All higher mental functions – those that are inimitable to human beings – are initially created through collaborative activity; only later do they become internal mental processes.

Vygotsky summarized his conception of meaning by emphasizing that meaning is not the computation of all the psychological operations which situate behind the word (Mahn, 2004:126). Meaning is something more explicit – it is the internal structure of the sign operation. It is what is lying between the thought and the word. Meaning is not equal to the word nor equal to the thought (Mahn, 2004:126).

Berk and Winsler (2002:115) note that educators in Vygotskian-based classrooms convert the environment into an exceedingly literate setting in which numerous different types of symbolic communication are used and integrated.

According to the view of In Kozulin and Presseisen (1995:69), Vygotsky made no effort to intricate the activities of human mediators beyond their function as vehicles of symbolic tools. This left lacunae in Vygotsky's theory of mediation. These lacunae were later filled by the work of Feuerstein.

2.3.3 Nyborg's perspective

Hansen (2003:54) marks that, according to Nyborg, the main principle of pedagogical activity is to mediate culture to each new generation. Central in this regard is the mediation of knowledge and skills, including language skills, which serve as tools for the mediation of the knowledge and skills acquired. One can deduce from Nyborg's theory of learning that the quality of mediation differs in the degree to which mediators are able to provide optimum conditions of learning for persons who may differ widely (Hansen, 2003:54).

2.3.4 Neo Piagetian perspective

According to Haywood (2003:71), the neo-Piagetian approach is not typically didactic, which would imply that active, mediator-directed teaching is not seen often. The *how-to* question is answered by a type of discovery method, by placing opportunities in the path of learners, creating cognitive conflict and the need to know, and depending on the equilibration processes of assimilation and accommodation to resolve the cognitive conflict and in that way add to the individual's store of knowledge. The role of mediators is fundamentally a steering one, rather than a direct teaching one.

2.3.5 Feuerstein's perspective

In the 1950s and 1960s, Feuerstein and his colleagues were talking in analogous terms about the need to assess a child's potential for learning by carefully analysing the amount and nature of mediation required to help a

child acquire a new concept, idea or ability. Over a number of years, the Feuerstein team has been experimenting with alternative ways of assessing an individual's potential for learning (Blagg, 1991:6; Lomofsky & Young, 2007:3-4).

Developed by Feuerstein over 30 years ago, the theory of Mediated Learning Experience (MLE) complements the earlier work by the Russian researcher Lev Vygotsky, who developed mediation as a means to support learners in developing cognitive processes. Feuerstein extends his work to a broad cultural setting and considers what can be done to help people overcome common impediments to learning (Greenberg & Fickeisen, 2009:1).

Feuerstein makes an important point as far as teaching and learning are concerned. If the learner's original cultural mediators fail in any way in their mediation task, the learner will be destitute of the opportunity to develop the cognitive processes required in the context of schooling – those specific patterns of behaviour and strategies to deal with direct contact to stimuli. It is therefore the duty of the educator to raise the level of cognitive functioning of all learners by intentionally creating mediated learning experiences (Du Plessis *et al.*, 2007:10).

According to Tzuriel (2000:220), Feuerstein focused on ways to bring about change rather than on the etiology of the manifested deficit. Nonetheless, the biological factors are not overlooked, nor are their detrimental effects denigrated. The argument is that in spite of the strength of the biological factors, there are ways to conquer them – although some individuals conquer things more easily than others.

Falik (2000:314) points out that MLE is a natural and essential aspect of human existence, without which the full expression of what it is to be human cannot be fulfilled. An interpersonal interaction is mediational to the degree that it contains a vibrant process between an active and involved human and another human who interposes him or herself between the organism and the external sources of stimulation and responding. Between the stimulus (S) and

response (R) is the organism (O). Feuerstein has added an agent (H) that acts as an active and involved agent.



Figure 2.4: Mediated learning experiences model (Falik, 2000:314)

The theory of Feuerstein's MLE may be expressed by the formula S-H-O-H-R, in which a human mediator (H) is interposed between the stimulus and the organism. In this way, children acquire appropriate behaviour, learning sets, and operational structures by means of which their cognitive structure is constantly modified in response to direct stimulation (Feuerstein, 1980:16).

To ensure that a learning opportunity is generalized further than the immediate situation and therefore promotes the cognitive development of the learner, Feuerstein (2007:8) identifies a number of criteria for a mediated learning experience. A consciousness of these criteria will facilitate caregivers and educators to determine and enhance the quality of the interaction so that cognitive development can take place.

Feuerstein's assessment of learning potential breaks with a half-century theory and technology in the measurement of intelligence. He is not concerned about what a child or adolescent has learned, but about *how* the child learns and solves problems. Moreover, he is not concerned about the content of the mind, but about the formal structure of thought (Feuerstein, 1980:viii).

This study will focus on Feuerstein's perspective of mediation because the criteria he identified for mediation are suitable for teaching and learning. His view of mediation as an aid in the child's development cannot be ignored and is still applicable in modern classrooms. Moreover, it is the personal opinion of the researcher that mediation should fill a more prominent space in classrooms to enable maximum teaching and learning to take place.

2.3.6 Current perspectives on mediation

Kozulin (2004:15) mentions that mediated learning was already introduced in the previous century when Vygotsky introduced his theory in 1978. Until recently, Vygotsky's theory was not popular at all. The explanation for the sudden popularity is that researchers now experience many questions for which Vygotsky's theory offers possible solutions (Kozulin, 2004:15).

The reason why an educator these days needs to be a learning mediator and not only a traditional conveyer of information or learning content, is supported by the more holistic approach to education since the 1980's, based on the theory of constructivism (Fraser, 2006:6; Du Plessis *et al.*, 2007:15).

Kalantzis and Cope (2008:9) refer to a *new learning*. According to them, compared to the form of learning that is characteristic of our recent past, this *new learning* is about learning by doing, as well as learning by thinking; about the capability to be productive in the world, as well as knowing that world; about action as well as cognition.

According to Vakalisa (2004:2), a currently accepted view of classroom activity is that learners bring their own individual understanding of reality to the classroom, and that the educator's responsibility is to aid them to merge their existing knowledge with the new information, through reflective thinking. This view is based on constructivist theories.

The implication of a new learning perspective requires that the facilitator/educator should be an autonomous, highly skilled, responsible manager of student learning. The modern educator is both grounded in the community and a corporate player, a collaborator and a constituent of a self-regulating profession. He/she is not just a public servant, but a learner – a designer of learning environments, an evaluator of their efficacy, a researcher, a social scientist and an intellectual in their own right (Kalantzis & Cope, 2008:12).

2.4 MEDIATED LEARNING AND CONSTRUCTIVISM

It is clear from the preceding discussion around mediation, that mediated learning is underpinned by a constructivist approach to teaching and learning. The link between mediation and constructivism is explored below.

Through incorporating mediation in the classroom, the educator introduces a form of active learning. Learners become actively involved in their own learning process, which is a basic point of departure in constructivist classrooms.

Constructivists regard learning as individualized and social. Learning takes place in a milieu and knowledge is obtained by means of the vigorous construction and reconstruction of meaning. Learning, therefore, is a process during which knowledge is constructed on the basis of the information received (Du Plessis *et al.*, 2007:15).

Traditionally, learning has been thought to be a *mimetic* activity – a process that involves learners in repeating or miming newly presented information. Yet constructivist teaching practices assist learners to internalize and reshape, or transform new information. Constructivism is based on the belief that learners should be helped to construct knowledge that is meaningful and useful in their own lives (Jacobs, 2004:46).

Constructivist theories imply that a far more active role is played by learners in their own learning than is characteristic in a large number of classrooms at present (Du Plessis *et al.*, 2007:4). Fraser (2006:7) emphasizes that constructivism also regards learning as a procedure of reflection and interpretation of experiences. Learners should come to the classroom with a unique set of experiences which will establish how they will integrate new information with existing knowledge to reach a new understanding (Fraser, 2006:7).

According to Vakalisa (2004:4), from the Constructivists' perspective, the accomplishment of the teaching-learning activity stands or falls by the educator's initiative or lack thereof in creating a classroom climate that is

conducive to active participative learning by the learners. The educator, who strives to meet the need for active participation of the learner, engages the learner in reflective and critical thinking exercises about the content (Vakalisa, 2004:4).

Fraser (2006:6) points out the basic point of departure of constructivism as being that learning is an active process of constructing meaning. According to Constructivism, learning is individualized, social and transpires within context, and knowledge is obtained through active construction and reconstruction of meaning. Learning, therefore, is a route during which the learner constructs his or her own understanding and knowledge of the world on the basis of information received, through experience and reflection on experiences, rather than the mere amalgamation of information that is passed on. Constructivism does not focus so much on *what* learners learn, as on *how* they learn (Fraser, 2006:6).

Constructivism has the two main trends of cognitive and social Constructivism. Cognitive Constructivism focuses on the cognitive processes people use to make logical sense of the world around them. Social Constructivism perceives learning as a social process whereby learners acquire knowledge through interaction with their environment, instead of merely relying on the educator's lectures (Fraser, 2006:6).

According to Fraser (2006:6), Constructivism also regards learning as a process of reflection and interpretation of experiences. In Fraser's (2006:6) opinion, the basic assumptions that are underlying Constructivism are the following:

- Knowledge is built from experience.
- Learning is an individual interpretation of the world.
- Learning is a vigorous process in which meaning is developed on the basis of experience.

- Conceptual growth comes from the compromise of meaning, the sharing of manifold perspectives and the changing of our internal representations through collaborative learning.
- Learning should take place in sensible settings; testing should be integrated with the task and not be a separate activity.

2.5 THE CRITERIA OF MEDIATION

Feuerstein (2007:13-15) suggests twelve criteria for MLE which are useful guidelines for the mediator who may be a parent, an educator, a caregiver or another person. The first three criteria are all necessary conditions for an interaction to qualify as MLE, while the other nine criteria may function in accordance with the particular circumstances and need system of the individual and/or cultural group (Feuerstein *et al.*, 1994:15; Feuerstein, 2007:13-15). Feuerstein *et al.* (2010:40) highlight that mediated interaction is composed of two groups of parameters: the first group comprises parameters that are accountable for the universal character of the phenomenon of human modifiability – for the plasticity that characterizes the human being. This group encloses three parameters that generate the indispensable conditions to transform an interaction into MLE. In other words, without them the interaction will not be mediational (*cf.* 2.5.1). The second group comprises the situational criteria (*cf.* 2.5.2) and the final group comprises the integrative orienting belief system criteria (*cf.* 2.5.3).

According to Feuerstein *et al.* (1994:15), these twelve criteria – also referred to as parameters – are:

- Intentionality and reciprocity
- Transcendence
- Mediation of meaning
- Mediation of feeling of competence
- Mediation of regulation and control of behaviour

- Mediation of sharing behaviour
- Mediation of individuation and psychological differentiation
- Mediation of goal-seeking, goal-setting, and goal-achieving behaviour
- Mediation of challenge: the search for novelty and complexity
- Mediation of an awareness of the human being as a changing entity
- Mediation of the search for an optimistic alternative
- Mediation of the feeling of belonging

The twelve criteria are elucidated in the sections below.

2.5.1 Universal criteria

The universal criteria are present in all interpersonal interactions and are necessary to create conditions for general development and extended learning (Fraser, 2006:10).

2.5.1.1 Intentionality and reciprocity

In the mediated learning interaction, the specific content of the interaction is formed by the mediated intentionality. The mediator with intentionality changes the stimuli, causes them to be more prominent, more influential, more imposing, and eventually more understandable and important to the recipient of the mediation (Blagg, 1991:19; Feuerstein *et al.*, 2010: 41).

Feuerstein *et al.* (1985:48), Klein (2000:242) and Falik (2001b) define intentionality and reciprocity as any act or series of acts of an adult that appears to be directed towards influencing a child's behaviour. These behaviours are considered reciprocal when the infant or child in the interaction reacts vocally, verbally or nonverbally.

Intentionality and reciprocity is an interaction characterized by efforts from a mediating adult to generate in the child a state of vigilance, and to facilitate an

efficient registration of the information (input phase), an adequate processing (elaboration phase) and accurate responding (output phase). The reciprocity constituent is of vital importance to the excellence and continuation of the mediational process (Tzuriel, 2000:219; Deutsch, 2003:34-37; Feuerstein *et al.*, 2010:41).

Feuerstein *et al.* (1994:17) mention that intentionality and reciprocity are the main conditions of an MLE interaction. In MLE the specific content of the interaction – no matter how important – is shaped by the intention to mediate to the mediatee, not only the particular stimuli, activity or relationship, but also to share this intention with the mediatee.

According to Feuerstein *et al.* (1994:18), Tzuriel (2001:25-27) and Feuerstein *et al.* (2002:75), reciprocity is a method to turn an implicit intention into an explicit, volitional and cognizant act. Any content can tolerate the special quality of MLE if shaped by the intention. The intention transforms the three partners involved in the interaction – the stimuli, the mediator and the mediatee. The particular occurrence is transformed in some of its characteristics by the mediator's intention to make it experienced by the mediatee (Feuerstein *et al.*, 1994:18). Feuerstein *et al.* (2010:43) mention that reciprocity comes into the picture when the learner shares in the intention of the mediator and transforms the intention into an intentional act.

Educators as mediators should make their intention with teaching apparent and purposefully engage the attention of the learner as mediatee. By wanting to share their intention, mediators transform the stimuli and arouse the interest and curiosity of the mediatee. The emphasis is not only on what they intend doing, but on how and why they perform a particular act (Feuerstein, 2007:13).

The educator should try to make the environmental stimuli compatible to the learner's requirements by selecting, exaggerating, grouping, sequencing, accentuating, scheduling or pacing stimuli. Taking a toy from or handing a toy to a child is seen as intentionality and reciprocity only when it is evident that the adult's behaviour is intentional and not accidental, and when there is an

observable response from the child that he/she saw the intentional behaviour (Klein, 2000:242).

In the context of this study, this principle was conceptualized by means of the educator's act in influencing a child's behaviour by capturing the learner's attention by sharing the intention of the content. This parameter should involve the educator/mediator who engages the child with an intention to teach, with the child having a reciprocal desire to learn.

2.5.1.2 Transcendence

Another important component, in addition to intentionality and reciprocity, is the mediation of transcendence, in other words: going beyond the goals of the interaction. Making an individual obtain a skill or rendering him competent in an area of knowledge is the objective of the interaction between parent and child, teacher and learner. The intention to make him *feel* proficient, however, clearly transcends the immediate goal of skill or competence acquisition (Blagg, 1991:51; Feuerstein *et al.*, 1994:20-21; Falik, 2001b; Tzuriel, 2001:25-27).

Mediation for transcendence is characterized by going further than the actual context or the immediate needs of the child. The mediator typically tries to reach out for universal principles and/or goals that are not bound to the *here and now* or the specific and concrete aspects of the situation (Tzuriel, 2000:219).

Feuerstein *et al.* (2010:45) emphasize that there is an extraordinary significance of transcendence – it is the humanizing feature of the interaction between a human being and the world. He mentions that the mediating of transcendence creates in a human being an immense variety of possibilities of action and reaction, of which the significance is the resulting flexibility and creativity of reaction, which enables the proclivity for a permanent modifiability to adapt to new situations.

According to Klein (2000:242), Deutsch (2003:34-37) and Fraser (2006:10), transcendence may be provided through expressions implying inductive and

deductive reasoning, spontaneous comparisons, and clarifications of orientation, noting strategies for short- and long-term reminiscence or explore-and-recall memory activities. Explaining, elaborating, associating and raising consciousness to metacognitive aspects of thinking, relating past, present and future experiences that relate to physical, logical or social rules and framework are a few of the main aspects.

The educator as mediator goes further than the immediate objectives of the interaction by including more remote ones. The educator should transcend further than the content of the lesson by linking past, present and future events (Feuerstein, 2007:14).

Feuerstein (2000:154) mentions that the mediator is accountable for the stimulation reaching the recipient of mediation. The way to mediation causes the mediator to change the three elements of the interaction: the mediator, the stimulation and the recipient of mediation.

In the context of this study, it is evident that a main objective of transcendence should be that the mediator applies the learning that is taking place beyond the particular situation.

2.5.1.3 Mediation of meaning

Blagg (1991:19, 51), Feuerstein *et al.* (1994:15, 28-29) and Feuerstein *et al.* (2010:46) are of the opinion that mediation of meaning is what creates the motivational and emotional forces that drive our activity and behaviour. Mediation of meaning endows the beneficiary of mediation with the feeling of necessity and essentiality in the implementation of the substance contained in the mediation (Feuerstein, 2000:155).

According to Feuerstein (2007:13), the mediator ensures that the interaction should be charged with meaning and enthusiasm. Mediation of meaning is linked to cultural roots which influence the nature of the values to be transmitted. Learners ought to be encouraged to expand an orientation towards searching for meaning and causation in the context of their own situations.

Klein (2000:242) mentions that mediation of meaning entails an adult's behaviour that expresses verbal or non-verbal excitement, appreciation or affect, in relation to objects, animals, concepts or values. These behaviours may comprise facial gestures or paralinguistic expressions (such as a sigh or scream of surprise), verbal expressions of influence and expressions of valuation of the experience.

Mediation of meaning refers to interactions in which the mediator tries, when presenting a stimulus or pointing to an event, to emphasize its significance and worth. This is done by expressing attention and affect and by pointing to its importance and value. The significance of a stimulus can be conveyed non-verbally or verbally (Feuerstein *et al.*, 1985:49; Tzuriel, 2000:219).

In the opinion of Feuerstein *et al.* (1994:26), the mediation of meaning has two main roles to play in determining the quality of the interaction and its formative power. The first is rendering efficient the mediator's attempts to convey to the mediatee the stimulus event, relationship, and concepts which are the purposes of the interaction. The other role is the endowment of the mediatee with the *need* to look for the *meaning* in a wider sense of the term. This includes the search for causal as well as teleological relationships between events and not just the meaning of the mediator's efforts to express them to him (Feuerstein *et al.*, 1994:26).

Cognitive connections should be created to bind the content of the interaction to other contents. For example, mediation of a feeling of achievement given to children in a reading lesson endows them not only with confidence in their ability in the lesson, but also with an enormously valuable cognitive instrument, which also enables them to appraise their ability in totally different areas (Feuerstein, 2000:155).

According to Feuerstein *et al.* (1994:25), a lack of meaning affects the mediator and the mediatee and, *ipso facto*, the amount, nature and intensity of the interaction: organism – environment.

The mediated propensity of the individual to search for and construct meanings for one's life is the aspect and driving force of the transformations

and challenges that will be undergone, because transitions and changes during life necessitate the person to adapt the new situations to the meanings that have been assigned to preceding situations in life (Feuerstein *et al.*, 2010:47).

For the purposes of this study, the concept of mediation of meaning entailed the transmission of knowledge to the learner in understanding the significance, value and relevance of what he/she is doing.

2.5.2 Situational criteria

The situational criteria are linked to specific learning experiences which provide opportunities for mediational intervention (Falik, 2001b).

2.5.2.1 Mediation of competence

Feuerstein (2007:14) is of the opinion that the educator needs to generate a feeling of competence in the learner. The educator ought to provide opportunities for the learner to interact with tasks which he/she can master and so experience success and obtain positive feedback and support.

For human beings to operate with confidence, meet challenges and cope with situations that are new for them, they must feel that they are competent to manage these situations – to overcome difficulties, become familiar with the new and the unknown, and approach them with the anticipation that they will master them (Deutsch, 2003:34-37; Fraser, 2006:11; Feuerstein *et al.*, 2010:50-51).

To mediate feelings of competence entails any verbal or non-verbal behaviour of an adult that expresses satisfaction with a child's behaviour and that identifies a precise component of the child's behaviour that the adult considers contributive to the experience of success. Such identification can be achieved, for example, by the careful timing of a verbal or gestural expression of satisfaction, through repetition of a desired behaviour, or through verbal and non-verbal expression (for example the word *good*). These expressions

evoke the concept of appraisal in a way that is meaningful to the child (Feuerstein *et al.*, 1985:49; Klein, 2000:242-243).

Feuerstein *et al.* (1994:30) and Tzuriel (2001:25-27) alert us to the fact that, in order to establish a feeling of competence, one has to *be* competent. If not, the feeling of competence is illusory and has its origins only in fantasy. The feeling has to be reflected in the views of others and in the interpretation given by them to one's behaviour as manifesting competence.

In mediation of feelings of competence, the mediator originally arranges the environment to guarantee the children's success and interprets the environment in a way which conveys to the child the awareness of the capability of functioning independently and successfully. This is done in a variety of ways, such as reorganizing the child's environment so as to ensure opportunities for success, explaining to the child the reasons for successes or failures, and by rewarding the child for attempts to master the situation and cope effectively with current problems (Tzuriel, 2000:220; Feuerstein *et al.*, 2002:77).

According to Feuerstein *et al.* (1994:36), the need to mediate to the individual a feeling of competence is much bigger today than ever before, since the sense of belonging to a collective representation is to a great extent weaker. The feeling of competence may play a vital role in the adaptation of the individual to new situations, an ongoing condition of life in today's world. Blagg (1991:51) and Feuerstein *et al.* (2010:51) mention that the feeling of ability and competence is expected to play a fundamental role in the individual's adaptation to new situations because one has to feel a general sense of ability in order to have the valour necessary to take on challenges, to investigate realities and to perform unfamiliar and novel tasks.

The researcher regarded it as imperative that educators should give meaningful appraisal or recognition to learners when a task was well done.

2.5.2.2 Mediation of self-regulation and control of behaviour

Behaviour is regulated on a mediational basis by the process of matching the task requirements with the child's capacities and interests, as well as through organizing and sequencing steps leading in the direction of success. For example, *It is hot; cool it first before putting it in your mouth*. An adult models that behaviour and/or verbally suggests to the child regulation of behaviour in relation to the specific requirements of a task. There should be regulation concerning speed, precision, force and preferred sequence of activities (Feuerstein *et al.*, 1985:49; Klein, 2000:243).

Feuerstein *et al.* (1994:37) are of the opinion that mediated regulation of behaviour creates the flexibility and plasticity necessary for modifying the individual with respect to inhibition as well as initiation. It accelerates behaviour through the orientation of the individual to self-reflection, provides the feedback necessary for decisions bearing upon the appropriateness or inappropriateness of certain behaviours. Mediation of regulation of behaviour has its major emphasis on the creation of the prerequisite, cognitive elements which creates the propensity for a reasoned way of behaving adaptively (Blagg, 1991:451; Feuerstein *et al.*, 1994:37; Falik, 2001).

Tzuriel (2000:220) is of the opinion that, in mediation for control and regulation of behaviour, the mediator regulates the child's responses, depending on the task demands, as well as on the child's behavioural approach. Regulation of behaviour is carried out by either inhibiting impulsive tendencies, or by accelerating inefficient slow behaviour. This mediation is of grave importance in helping the child to record information accurately, to delay needs for immediate gratification and to pace the inner rhythm of response as a function of task demands (Tzuriel, 2000:220; Deutsch, 2003:34-37).

Learners are assisted by the educator to monitor their own behaviour and develop metacognitive, self-reflective mode of functioning and a need for controlled and planned behaviour. This will curb impulsiveness and encourage them to think before acting or speaking (Tzuriel, 2001:25-27; Feuerstein *et al.*, 2002:78; Feuerstein, 2007:14).

In conclusion of this discussion, Fraser (2006:11) and Feuerstein *et al.* (2010:52) argue that the regulation of behaviour is thus a product of an individual's ability to impose thinking on actions – to examine oneself, to assess the situation and to decide how and when to react.

In this study, the researcher aimed at determining how educators succeed in guiding learners to self-regulate and control their behaviour during teaching and learning. Learners should be given opportunities to plan, monitor and evaluate their own learning efforts.

2.5.2.3 Mediation of sharing behaviour

Feuerstein *et al.* (1985:49) and Feuerstein *et al.* (2010:53) hold the belief that the mediated interaction of sharing behaviour is designed to refurbish to us the readiness and ability to make contact and arrive at a meeting with our fellow human beings, and to enhance in us the ability to rub shoulders with one another, to alter ourselves to one another, to increase insight and support from one another, and to create harmony between our experiences with one another.

Sharing behaviour is observed at a very early stage with the child pointing to everything he/she sees, as if he/she wants to make the other person experience what he/she experiences perceptually. At later stages, other manifestations of affect (like crying or laughing) are the modes by which the self projects itself into another person and attempts to make the other share his/her feelings (Feuerstein *et al.*, 1994:41; Tzuriel, 2001:25-27; Deutsch, 2003:34-37).

Blagg (1991:40), Feuerstein *et al.* (2002:78) and Feuerstein (2007:14) indicate that a need for sharing behaviour exists as an individual need at a very early age. The educator must encourage group work and cooperation between learners.

The researcher was particularly interested in finding evidence in the classrooms which took part in the research that pointed to opportunities for social learning to support mediation of sharing behaviour.

2.5.2.4 Mediation of individuation

Individuation, the opposite of sharing behaviour, represents the need of the individual to become an articulated, differentiated self as opposed to the *other* with whom he/she yet shares him/herself (Blagg, 1991:51; Feuerstein *et al.*, 1994:42; Falik, 2001b). Feuerstein *et al.* (2010:54) mention that mediation of individuation is equivalent to, and perhaps dissimilar to, the mediation of sharing. It is no less significant to build into a human being a feeling of individualization: of being a separate entity with the right to think and to articulate oneself in a special way that is distinct from that of others.

The educator as mediator values and recognizes individual differences and divergent responses. Educators as mediators need to encourage autonomy, independence and originality in the learners' thinking (Tzuriel, 2001:25-27; Deutsch, 2003:34-37; Feuerstein, 2007:14).

According to Feuerstein (2007:14) and Feuerstein *et al.* (2010:54), learners are directed to plan, set and achieve goals. The educator needs to encourage learners towards goal-directed behaviour in personal and academic spheres.

When seen in the context of this study, the researcher found it important that educators need to value differences among learners, as well as different ways in presenting learning content to learners.

2.5.2.5 Mediation of challenge

Meeting a challenge means being prepared to be involved not only in a familiar vicinity in which we are used to engage, but also in newer and more difficult areas of activity. In the modern world, with rapid and sharp changes that are an inseparable part of it, a person will be incapable of adapting unless he or she can meet the challenges of the novel and the unfamiliar (Feuerstein *et al.*, 1985:50; Tzuriel, 2001:25-27; Feuerstein *et al.*, 2010:56).

The mediation of challenging behaviour should be considered the goal of education in general and fortification in particular for all programmes aiming to prepare the individual for adapting to the novelty and complexity of our world.

The information revolution which the world faces requires from the individual, often totally unprepared, a readiness to deal with a complex task he has never before experienced (Feuerstein *et al.*, 1994:45; Deutsch, 2003:34-37).

Learners are motivated to adapt new and challenging situations and events. Mediation must prepare learners to face and master novel and complex tasks and attain success (Fraser, 2006:1; Feuerstein, 2007:15).

In the opinion of Feuerstein *et al.* (1994:45) and Feuerstein *et al.* (2010:56), mediation of challenging behaviour is done best by allowing the individual to confront the novel situation in a gratifying way.

In summary, this principle implies that educators should motivate learners to take risks and to approach challenging situations in an optimistic manner. Educators need to show learners upon the possibility that they will not necessarily succeed in everything they tackle in life, but that it is essential to stay positive and not to give up trying to succeed.

2.5.2.6 Mediation of goal-seeking, goal-setting, and goal-achieving behaviour

The existence of a goal in the individual's mental repertoire reflects the beginning of a representational modality of thinking. The mediator presents to the mediatee a variety of potential goals, many of which expand the mediatee's sphere of awareness as to what is possible, desirable and attainable (Blagg, 1991:51; Tzuriel, 2001:25-27; Feuerstein *et al.*, 2010:55).

According to Feuerstein *et al.* (1994:44), Deutsch (2003:34-37), Fraser (2006:11) and Feuerstein *et al.* (2010:56), the presence of a goal in the mental repertoire of the individual is a reflection of the origin of a representational modality of thinking. Seeking out a goal and striving towards it requires the magnification of one's sphere of experience by entering into a world which is beyond the sensorial, immediately perceived reality.

In light of this, it is important in mediating to the developing child, that the hunt and choice of a goal should enrich and articulate his/her life as a learner.

Educators should thus focus on motivating learners to set realistic goals for themselves and demonstrate that they are attainable through perseverance.

2.5.3 Integrative orienting belief system criteria

Falik (2001b) mentions that the integrative orienting belief system criteria are necessary to integrate changes in functioning into cognitive structures for sustained behavioural change.

2.5.3.1 Mediation of change

The educator as mediator should believe in human modifiability and have an active modification approach. The mediation for self-change and awareness of *signs of change* among educators presents a more dynamic way of evaluating learners (Tzuriel, 2001:25-27; Deutsch, 2003:34-37; Feuerstein, 2007:15).

According to Feuerstein *et al.* (1994:46), Fraser (2006:12) and Feuerstein *et al.* (2010:57-58), one should bear in mind that the human being is open to extreme and radical changes in all possible directions and contents: competence, skills, moral judgments, emotions and affectivity. Feuerstein *et al.* (2010:57) mention that, in addition to the biological changes and the growth associated with age, human beings should perceive themselves, and be perceived by others, as possessing a continuous identity.

Mediators should not forget that the human being is a changing entity. As the child matures, so may many of his/her characteristics and his/her personality. In the context of teaching and learning this implies that learners should always be able to acknowledge that they have gained something/knowledge, skills or attitudes from a teaching and learning experience which they did not know or could not do before.

2.5.3.2 Mediation of an optimistic alternative

When faced by diverse possibilities for action or choice, some people will tend to select the pessimistic alternative (Feuerstein *et al.*, 2010:58-59).

Unfortunately, this can be a self-fulfilling prophesy. The choice of a pessimistic alternative encourages passivity in the one who chooses it. The search for an optimistic alternative, and the conveyance of the expectation, leads us to look for and acknowledge change and increases our readiness to attack environmental factors that threaten our physical and mental equilibrium (Falik, 2001b; Tzuriel, 2001:25-27; Feuerstein *et al.*, 2010:59).

People are often confronted with the choice between optimistic and pessimistic alternatives in judging their own behaviour or the events they experience. Adhering to an optimistic alternative is the point of departure for a series of cognitive steps, the aim of which is to produce evidence for the chosen alternative (Feuerstein *et al.*, 1994:48; Deutsch, 2003:34-37).

The educator is confronted with a choice between pessimistic and optimistic alternatives. Pessimism triggers a passive approach, whereas the optimistic view anticipates positive outcomes and encourages the learner to look for ways to resolve a problem (Fraser, 2006:12; Feuerstein, 2007:15).

It is thus imperative that the educator should remember: knowing that something is possible makes the learner become committed to the search for ways to turn the possible into a materialized experience. It is thus the duty of the mediator to make sure that the child anticipates positive outcomes; only then are chances good that this can continue throughout the child's life.

2.5.3.3 Mediation of a feeling of belonging

The mediation of a feeling of belonging has to go beyond the immediate family to a societal reference group. There is a need to enlarge a learner's view beyond his/her immediate experience (Falik, 2001b; Fraser, 2006:12; Feuerstein, 2007:15; Feuerstein *et al.*, 2010:59).

According to Feuerstein *et al.* (1994:49), Tzuriel (2001:25-27) and Deutsch (2003:34-37), a lack of belonging to an enlarged family of uncles, aunts, and cousins means a need of relationship to the vertical axis of the family which serves as the link with its collaterals. Mediation of the feeling of belonging is

of particular importance at a time when the insulated family offers little security to the child as to the stability of the structure to which he belongs.

In doing research on mediation, it is seen as compulsory to include these twelve criteria in a mediational approach to teaching and learning. All twelve criteria form a unit and cannot be separated in applying mediation. This study set out to establish how well educators apply the criteria of mediation.

The researcher will now discuss the implication and impact when mediation is applied in the classroom.

2.6 THE IMPLICATION AND IMPACT OF MEDIATION IN THE CLASSROOM

Tzuriel (2000:220) is of the opinion that, according to Feuerstein, the MLE strategies enable children to internalize learning mechanisms, facilitate learning processes and self-mediation, give indications about future changes of cognitive structures, develop deficient cognitive functions, and provide for the ability to benefit in the future from mediation in other contexts. From this it follows that changes in cognitive structures during development depend to a large degree on appropriate mediation.

Vakalisa (2004:2) advises that, to assist learners in achieving certain outcomes, the educator needs to coach them to partake actively in their own learning. In classrooms where educators employ a participative approach to teaching as advocated by mediation, the teaching-learning relationships between educators and learners are dynamic, rather than static and predictable.

The mediated child who responds or reciprocates to the mediator's behaviour enables the mediator to alter his/her mediation and continue the process efficiently. Intentionality and reciprocity is observed when the child's attention is intentionally focused on an entity and the child responds explicitly to that behaviour (Tzuriel, 2000:219).

An educator cannot merely pass on information and expect learners to reproduce it verbatim. The educator should rather act as a *go-between* between the contents and reality, and enable the learners to make sense of their world, while acting as a mediator of learning (Fraser, 2006:8).

Tzuriel (2000:219) mentions that, if learners experience an ample amount of mediation of meaning they will internalize and use it later in various contexts. In the end, they will initiate the attachment of meaning to new information, rather than passively waiting for meaning to come.

In the opinion of Klein (2000:244), most children who have benefited from proper affectionate care and mediation are basically secure and interested both in people and in the world around them. They have developed the need to interact and to share experiences with the caregiver, to focus and perceive clearly, to associate and form links between perceptions, ideas and behaviours: to choose an objective, to plan and organize their behaviour; to search for information, to ask, to explore and to take different components of reality into consideration.

According to the MLE theory, a child who receives satisfactory mediation for transcendence, for example, usually internalizes this and will use it efficiently in other contexts. The child will then learn to transfer the rules and strategies learned previously to other problems that differ in terms of content domain and level of complexity, novelty and abstraction.

The the impact and influence of mediation on learners who experience learning problems will now be discussed.

2.6.1 The relation of mediation to learning problems

In the opinion of Klein (2000:241), some differences in children's capability to benefit from new experiences are linked to the type of interactions they have had with the adults who cared for them. These differences are obvious in the way these children approach new experiences, in the way they incorporate them with other experiences and in the way they express themselves. Some who lack enthusiasm or the need to explore the environment, do not search

for meaning or make spontaneous comparisons between experiences. They relate to bits and pieces of reality, rather than to a continuous flow of meaningful experiences. They do not form a link between a cause and its effect, between past, present and future experiences (Klein, 2000:241).

The impact that barriers to learning have on learners is that learners could have difficulty in following the succession of instructions or complicated instructions and integrating information from a variety of sources. These learners have difficulty in working independently and in mastering great amounts of information. Their visual memory is often very deprived and they often become anxious when asked to read aloud. These learners are mostly afraid to perform in front of their peers, and therefore withdraw from group activities, with some of them also finding it difficult to concentrate (Du Plessis *et al.*, 2007:24).

Educators should remember that children with learning problems may have difficulties in bearing in mind or setting a goal for their behaviour and can often not control their behaviour. Some of these children are not aware of the fact that they can obtain information from adults or from other sources beyond what meets their eyes or their other senses, and frequently do not realize that something meaningful may be obtained through questioning or exploration. Children who have these confines may be considered as lacking flexibility of mind or as having difficulties in benefiting from new experiences (Klein, 2000:241).

Du Plessis *et al.* (2007:24-25) mention that the following ought to be kept in mind when a group is comprised of learners who experience learning barriers:

- Plan classroom groups carefully: Educators may be more aware of the weaker or stronger and more or less outspoken learners in the class. By being aware of this, the educator can integrate groups to ensure that each group is balanced.
- Plan activities which promote communication and respect: Learners should be encouraged to give their own voice to matters arising through the content or classroom situation. Learners should be taught to also

listen to another's point of view and to accept and respect the fact that everyone may and can differ in opinion. As sharing behaviour and individuation are two mediation parameters, it should be a clear indication to the educator that these two aspects should definitely be promoted.

- Use peer teaching and cooperative learning: As sharing behaviour and individuation are two mediation parameters, educators should acknowledge that these two aspects are vital in the classroom. Learners should be given the opportunity to share their understanding of the content with their peers. By doing this, the educator will find that peers have the tendency to explain difficult content on a different level which may be absorbed in a positive way by a learner who experiences difficulty in understanding the learning content.
- Try to prevent distractions: Distractions limit effective learning. Educators should prevent unnecessary distractions in the classroom. Although not always possible, the educator should avoid internal distractions (from within the classroom, such as when learners are behaving rudely while the educator explains the work) and external distractions (from outside the classroom, such as some activities occurring outside the immediate classroom).
- Seat learners in front or in the centre: Weak or problematic learners may be seated in the front of the class. This will enable the educator to have more control over difficult situations and to sense easily if a learner needs attention or reveals problematic behaviour.
- Give learners alternatives: Educators should promote learners' search for more than one view on a matter. As mediation of challenge is another mediation parameter, learners should be encouraged to take risks.
- Encourage learners to work hard: It is the task of the educator to motivate learners and to show them that hard work pays. In working towards mastering the content and tasks, the educator addresses another parameter in mediation, namely accepting a challenge. A feeling of

competence will be evoked in the learners and they might feel more able to tackle the next task handed to them.

- Allow in-depth studies: In order to pay attention to the parameter, mediation of meaning, educators should motivate learners to search for deeper knowledge in life. Learners should apply occurrences in our world to the learning content. In other words, learners should be motivated to extend their subject knowledge and apply it.
- Vary presentations: Monotony is unacceptable. Mediators should teach themselves to vary not only their tone of voice, but also their ways in presenting the learning content. Knowing that we all have five senses, the educator should abstain from using a blackboard only, where merely seeing and hearing the lesson are involved. The learners in an English class may, for example, be directed to smell something (like rain or fruit) before writing a descriptive essay on such a topic.
- Limit multi-tasking: In being focused on finishing the syllabus in time, educators may start giving learners more than one task at a time. Every person can only do one thing at a time and learners should be given a fair opportunity to do every task that they get to their best ability. This, however, is impossible if too many things are done in class. Not only does it confuse learners, but it also prevents them from doing their best.
- Remember to repeat things: The more you hear something, the better you remember it. In order to get work done the right way and to ensure that learners know what is expected of them, educators should repeat important information.
- Help learners to manage their time and be organized: It is any mediator's duty to guide learners. Learners should be taught the value of time management. It is also imperative to teach them organizational skills. The better they are at these two concepts, the easier they will complete work and the better they will be prepared for the future.

- Give oral comment: A feeling of competence motivates everyone. The value of verbal communication should not be underestimated. Learners strive towards a competent feeling. Educators should value moments of appraisal when work is done correctly and to the best of a child's ability. Negative commentary is equally important. Learners will never know where to improve if their mistakes are not pointed out to them. Reprimanding disruptive behaviour should also be a priority in the class in order to give everyone an equal opportunity to learn. These aspects were taken into consideration during the observations.

The role that learners play in following a mediated approach will be discussed next.

2.6.2 The role of learners in a mediated learning approach

Karpov (2003:49) emphasizes the fact that, based on Vygotsky's findings, it is clear that human mental processes, just like human labour, are mediated by tools. These are special, psychological tools such as language, signs and symbols. However, humans are not born with these tools. These tools are invented by human civilization, and they are obtained by children in the course of interpersonal communication with adults or peers. Having been acquired and internalized, these psychological tools begin to mediate children's mental processes. Human mental processes mediated by tools are called *higher mental processes* by Vygotsky (Karpov, 2003:49).

Including learners in the teaching and learning process implies a participative approach to teaching and learning (Vakalisa, 2004:3). The notion of participative learning is not completely new, but it has been selected to express a deeper conception of what is usually referred to as *learner activity*, *involvement of learners* or *active participation of learners* in teaching-learning situations. Participative learning is embedded in inherent involvement of the learner with the learning. It is grounded in a philosophy which states that knowledge is the construction of the individual learner, and that this construction depends on each individual's awareness of the reality that impacts on his/her sensory organs (Vakalisa, 2004:3).

Mediation in the classroom should be a conscious approach which is not just the responsibility of the educator. Learners should strive towards active involvement in the learning process. The educator alone – in the role of mediator – cannot ensure success in a classroom. More components are involved in the learning situation than only a mediator. Without the learner – the mediatee – there is no purpose in teaching any content. Therefore, learners should be involved in the learning process and should be motivated to contribute to their own learning and the learning of their peers.

The competences that are needed of educators in order to be mediators will be discussed below.

2.6.3 Competences required of educators to be mediators of learning

According to Fraser (2006:2), the general understanding of competence in relation to a profession – such as teaching – is certainly that the competent person has the knowledge, skills and ability to perform the tasks and roles required to expected and acceptable standards (Fraser, 2006:2). A more detailed discussion concerning the competences that are required of educators when they are mediators of learning will follow in Chapter Three.

The researcher will now share the role that language plays in a mediated learning environment with the reader.

2.7 THE ROLE OF LANGUAGE IN MEDIATED LEARNING

The limits of my language are the limits of my world.

- Wittgenstein (in Fisher, 2003:204)

In the opinion of the researcher, a person obtains knowledge of learning content through language. It is crucial that focus is put on making learners language-efficient. The weaker a child's language ability, the weaker his/her achievement in other subjects. All subjects are taught in either the child's primary or first additional language. If a child's knowledge in the particular language is limited, the possibility to master his/her subjects is extremely

limited. In other words, being efficient in language does not only help in the language subject, but also in all other subjects.

Every lesson is a lesson in language, for language is the dress of thought. The common bond between philosophy and the teaching of English is that both involve a search for meaning (Fisher, 2003:204). Vygotsky (1978:33) takes this concept further by saying that language and perception are linked. In the resolution of nonverbal tasks, even if a problem is solved without a sound being uttered, language plays a role in the outcome. These findings substantiate the argument for the inevitable interdependence between human thought and language.

Just as a mould gives form to a substance, words can form an activity into a structure. However, that structure may be changed or reshaped when children learn to use language in ways that permit them to go beyond previous experiences when planning future action (Vygotsky, 1978:28).

Vygotsky regarded language as a critical bridge between the socio-cultural world and individual mental functioning. He viewed the attainment of language as the most significant milestone in children's cognitive development (Berk & Winsler, 2002:12). Much of Vygotsky's explanation of cognitive development focuses on the role of language. He saw it as one of the most essential of *psychological tools*, culturally developed ways of behaving towards objects which tolerate high level cognitive functioning (Meadows, 2003:244).

The most significant moment on the route of intellectual development, which gives birth to the solely human forms of practical and abstract intelligence, occurs when speech and practical activity, two previously completely independent lines of development, congregate (Vygotsky, 1978:24).

According to Berk and Winsler (2002:20-21), to clarify the role of language in the emergence of uniquely human cognitive activity, the researcher needs to consider in greater detail two indispensable features of the sequence of development: mediation through signs and internalization of those signs (Berk & Winsler, 2002:20-21):

- Mediation through signs: Vygotsky emphasized that signs, or symbolic tools, are the important link between the social and psychological planes of functioning. He noted that an extensive variety of symbolic tools are generated by human beings: deliberate memory support, various systems for counting, works of art, writing, diagrams and maps. But the *tool of the mind* of pre-eminent importance in Vygotsky's theory is language; the most regularly used human representational system (Berk & Winsler, 2002:21).
- Internalization: Vygotsky's belief that speech as a *tool of the mind* is a consequence of the primary communicative function of language has important implications for the quality of mental processes. It implies that cognition continues to demonstrate communicative properties and the mark of the socio-cultural settings in which it originated long after it has been internalized and exists on the psychological plane, within the individual (Berk & Winsler, 2002:22).

The more familiar learners are with a language, the better they will understand their world and everything occurring around them and in their classroom.

Vygotsky (1978:89) argues that language arises initially as a means of communication between the child and the people in his environment. Vygotsky views learning as a profoundly social process and emphasizes dialogue and the varied roles that language plays in instruction and in mediated cognitive growth (John-Steiner & Souberman, 1978:131).

The specifically human capacity for language enables children to provide for supplementary tools in the solution to a problem prior to its execution, and to master their own (Vygotsky, 1978:28-29). Signs and words serve children first and foremost as a means of social contact with other people. The cognitive and communicative function of language then becomes the foundation of a new and superior form of activity in children (Vygotsky, 1978:28-29).

A unique feature of Vygotsky's theory is that a social perspective pervades even those circumstances in which children and adults seem to be involved in private cognitive activity – alone in a room reading a book, drawing a picture, solving a puzzle, ruminating on a past incident or daydreaming. All higher

mental functions – those that are inimitable to human beings – are initially created through collaborative activity: only later do they become internal mental processes (Berk & Winsler, 2002:20).

Literature is a fundamental part of a language. Literature enables learners to see the world from a different perspective. It teaches learners something about the esthetics in life. It is also important to apply mediation in studying this component in a language.

A link between mediation and the study of literature follows in the section below.

2.8 A MEDIATIONAL APPROACH TO STUDY LITERATURE

The researcher decided to focus on literature in the English classroom during her research. Having experienced that learners often find literature inaccessible, it was seen as a challenge to apply mediation to literature and not to grammar.

Potentially, the habits of the heart and mind taught in literature discussion could play a role in the learner, learning and making meaning in other disciplinary contexts (Miller, 2004:308).

According to Miller (2004:296), if educators want to encourage creative and effective classroom conversations, they have to engage pre-service and practising educators in open-forum discussions of texts in literature and pedagogy classes. Given the potentially influential role of educators' strategies on learners' literacy learning, those educators need to learn new roles as mediators through their own mediated opportunities to enable them to:

- reflect on their existing reading strategies for making sense of diverse texts;
- learn to expand their repertoires, to include strategies for narrative and critical thinking and cultural critique; and

- engage in and support discussions aimed at developing multiple, powerful literacy strategies for reading texts and the world.

These abilities also merge with the twelve mediation parameters. Learners will then be motivated to involve critical thinking about the world they live in. They will also be taught how to apply their knowledge in different contexts.

The various components of literature are now analyzed and the place of mediation in each component is established.

2.8.1 Reading as component of literature

According to Fisher (2003:205), it is recommended that learners' reading must include texts with challenging subject matter that broadens and extends thinking. Literature for reading and response should include a range of the following aspects:

- Modern stories and novels
- Modern and classic poetry
- Non-fiction texts from a range of media
- Texts drawn from a variety of cultures and traditions
- Myths, legends and traditional stories
- Plays and texts for drama

Even apparently simple and straightforward texts may require readers to introduce knowledge from the outside world if they are to make sense of what is written (Meadows, 1993:23).

Giving children texts that consist of challenging content is as directed by the mediation of challenge parameter (*cf.* 2.5.2.5). Everyone knows that reading expands one's knowledge. By motivating learners to read, the mediator addresses many other parameters, for example mediation of an awareness of the human being as a changing entity. The reason for this is that a learner will

be taught how to read more attentively. Learners will accordingly be enabled to change their outlook on life, because reading will enable them to know more of the world they live in (*cf.* 2.5.3.1).

2.8.1.1 The danger during reading periods

Why is it that in many learning situations it is the educators who ask the questions and the learners who should have most to ask, remain silent? Is it because children lack the ability to formulate questions, or because they lack the authority of sanctioned knowledge, or questioning is not what is expected of them? Questioning can require intellectual courage, my question may be silly or inappropriate, and so it is better to wait to see if it is articulated by another learner or by the educator. Educators therefore need to offer learners discourse practices which legitimate and facilitate their practice in questioning and provide models of enquiry that learners can internalize and apply for themselves (Fisher, 2003:102).

It is crucial that the intentionality and reciprocity parameter (*cf.* 2.5.1.1) is used effectively in ensuring that the learners pay attention to the reading. If the educator conveys her intention with the reading lesson, reciprocity will fall in place: the intention will then turn into a conscious act. For example, if the educator tells the learners in advance how the reading applies to them and perhaps to their assessment, learners would automatically be more interested in the lesson and, as a result, pay more attention.

2.8.2 Poetry as component of literature

Literature should be drawn from a variety of genres and include both poetry and drama. Using poetry as a stimulus for philosophical enquiry can help foster a love of poetry and at the same time enable learners to become thoughtful readers able to pose questions, to discuss and to evaluate critically the texts they read (Fisher, 2003:206).

To introduce poetry to the literature component of a language opens the doors for mediation for individuation. Each learner will get the opportunity to interpret a poem in his/her own individual manner (*cf.* 2.5.2.4).

2.8.3 Drama as component of literature

Fisher (2003:207) is of the opinion that drama as presentation or role play provides opportunities not only for children to read texts, but also to enter the narrative as participants. Drama brings the likelihood of thinking with the whole person, with body, voice and mind. Through improvisation and role play, children can discover their own and others' ideas. They can follow through their thoughts and feelings and consider the consequences. One way of responding to any story is through dramatic reconstruction or mime. Drama has the potential of putting children in touch with the very basic values of life (Fisher, 2003:207).

By introducing drama, the educator promotes mediation of sharing behaviour (*cf.* 2.5.2.3). Learners should be motivated to contribute to the lesson by each reading and dramatizing a part in the drama text. Mediation of meaning (*cf.* 2.5.1.3) will be promoted in relation to the text and each individual will then get the opportunity to express his/her opinion and interpretation of the text (*cf.* 2.5.2.3; 2.5.2.4).

2.8.4 Using stories in literature

Miller (2004:28) is of the opinion that within the last few decades, literature has been broadly recognized in many disciplines as a major way of knowing, a distinct narrative mode of understanding that can contribute to a fanatical and critical mind. By stimulating attention to dilemmas, alternative human possibilities, and the many sidedness of the human situation, literature offers the varying perspectives that can be constructed to make experience comprehensible (Miller, 2004:289).

Fisher (2003:97) believes that narrative comprehension is one of the earliest powers to emerge in the mind of the young child, and is the most widely used way of organizing human experience. The power of stories resides in their ability to create possible worlds as objects of intellectual inquiry. Stories provide a means to understand the world and to understand ourselves (Fisher, 2003:97).

According to Vygotsky, activities aimed at being well-read play a main role in the development of conscious awareness of mental functions and in bringing them under voluntary control. Once children become conscious of the symbolic and communicative systems of language, thinking starts to become an object of attention and reflection (Berk & Winsler, 2002:114).

One of the principal benefits of using a story as a stimulus for thinking in the classroom is that a good story provokes the interest and involvement of the child (Fisher, 2003:98). In mediating transcendence (*cf.* 2.5.1.2), the educator can go beyond the goals of the interaction. The educator makes the learner acquire a skill or renders him competent in an area of knowledge. By exposing learners to stories or novels, the educator goes beyond the purpose of teaching him the literature content. Being unaware of it, the learner is also exposed to other similar or dissimilar contexts as in the novel.

The researcher is of the opinion that, by applying mediation in the English literature classroom, the educator can transfer literature content more successfully to the learners. By applying all the mediation parameters, learners will not only interact with the content in a more efficient manner, but also adopt a love and fondness of reading, drama, stories and poetry.

2.9 SUMMARY

Feuerstein *et al.* (2010:38) emphasize that the experience of mediation is a form of interaction that accompanies human beings' development and has shaped human experience long before the formulation of the theory of mediated learning experience. It is thus almost impossible to suggest reasons why many educators do not find the application of mediation in the classroom a necessity.

From the literature study in Chapter Two, it is obvious that mediation is an indispensable requirement in classrooms. To ensure optimal teaching and learning, mediation needs to be present in all classroom activities.

This chapter started off by refreshing the reader's memory on the concept clarification of mediation (*cf.* 2.2) by defining the term mediator of learning (*cf.*

2.2.1) as someone who takes learners through learning materials in a way that maximizes learning. Thereafter the researcher found it vital to look at the foundation of mediation by doing research on the historical perspectives concerning the development of mediation (*cf.* 2.3). An overview was presented of Piaget (*cf.* 2.3.1), Vygotsky (*cf.* 2.3.2), the Nyborg perspective (*cf.* 2.3.3), the Neo Piagetian perspective (*cf.* 2.3.4) and finally the master of MLE, Feuerstein's point of view (*cf.* 2.3.5) on mediation. The researcher decided to follow a constructivist perspective, as constructivists' basic point of departure falls on learning as being an active process of constructing meaning (*cf.* 2.4).

The focus of the study was then shifted to current perspectives on mediation (*cf.* 2.3.6) in which various sources' opinions were given on the concept. A significant part of this chapter was devoted to the criteria of mediation (*cf.* 2.5) in which the researcher discussed the twelve vital parameters of mediation (*cf.* 2.5.1-2.5.3).

Attention was thereafter paid to the implication and impact of mediation in the classroom (*cf.* 2.6), which implies that teaching and learning will occur more effectively and to the learner's advantage. Here, the researcher indicated the relation of mediation to learning problems (*cf.* 2.6.1) which proved to assist learners to overcome their barriers to learning and to still experience optimal learning in the classroom. Thereafter, the role of learners in a mediated learning approach was studied (*cf.* 2.6.2). This implied that learners also have an obligation to ensure successful mediation in the classroom.

The chapter was then concluded by applying mediation to the literature component of a language (*cf.* 2.7; 2.8). The following different components in the literature division were linked to mediational parameters: reading (*cf.* 2.8.1), poetry (*cf.* 2.8.2), drama (*cf.* 2.8.3) and stories (*cf.* 2.8.4). The researcher showed the reader that mediation can simplify the study of literature. Learners will easily interact with the reading content and share their experiences and interpretation of literature with peers,

The researcher will focus on *Mediation and learners' fundamental rights: a legal framework* in Chapter Three.