The improvement of the teaching of informational writing: A study of six teachers

Lisbeth Berridge

Edith Cowan University

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THE IMPROVEMENT OF THE TEACHING OF INFORMATIONAL WRITING:

A STUDY OF SIX TEACHERS.

by

Lisbeth M. Berridge, B.Ed.

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfilment of the
Requirements for the Award of
Bachelor of Education with Honours
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USE OF THESIS

The Use of Thesis statement is not included in this version of the thesis.
ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to focus on the progressive stages through which six teachers moved in their efforts to improve children's writing of informational texts. An action research approach was used to control and monitor the work of the researcher and the six teachers as they sought to improve their classroom practice in the teaching of writing. The essential features of the approach were for the teachers to collaborate with the researcher in:

a) discussing their problems and in devising suitable solutions;
b) formulating a working hypothesis;
c) working out an appropriate plan comprised of the steps of action; and,
d) monitoring this plan as it was implemented.

In order to monitor the implementation of the plan, data from three sources were collected, analysed and collated:

a) personal-professional journals;
b) pupil questionnaire supplemented by teacher-student discussion; and,
c) the pupils' actual writing.
Since the process through which the teachers progressed was the focus of this study the following data sources were also used:

a) researcher-teacher interviews;
b) teacher questionnaires;
c) observation by the researcher;
d) tape-recordings of the meetings held with each group of participating teachers; and,
e) personal-professional journals kept by participants and researcher.

The action research process progressed through three cycles over a period of four months. During this time the teachers encountered many problems as they changed their approach to the teaching of writing.

It was concluded that to improve their teaching of writing, these teachers needed detailed knowledge of the different types of written texts, support by an specialist in the field, a simple plan to show them how to begin to implement the new teaching strategies, support of their school principal and teaching colleagues, and time to collaborate with the school staff and the acknowledged specialist.
The findings of this research project have clear implications for an education agency such as the Ministry of Education Western Australia. In the area of promoting change in school curriculums and classroom teaching practices, little improvement is likely to occur if the change is imposed "from the top". A simple and effective information disseminating strategy is needed at school level to keep teachers informed about advances being made in curriculum content and teaching practices, so that teachers will see the advantages of changing their knowledge and instructional methods. The trend of holding one-shot inservice courses, lasting one or two days, is not sufficient to effect change. Key specialists in each subject area, and for each geographical location, must be trained and assisted in moving about amongst the participants as individuals and as members of planning, reporting and supporting teams. Such specialists need to be well versed in recent trends in their area of specialisation and in the use of action research aimed at collaborative implementation of change. Specialists and teachers, working in collaboration, will effectively change school curriculums and classroom teaching practices thus enhancing school development.
DECLARATION

I certify that this thesis does not incorporate without acknowledgement any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any institution of higher education; and that to the best of my knowledge and belief it does not contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text.

Signature.

11.12.91

Date.................................
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:

In conducting my research and preparing this thesis I have had the assistance of advisers, colleagues and family. I am grateful to my tutor, Dr Ross Latham, whose encouragement and support not only improved my own writing but also the teachers in the Albany District: to his colleague Dr Peter Sloan, who together with Ross conducted the workshop that was the catalyst for this research; to the participants in my research seminar, Jenny Bickmore Brand, Stephen Simpson, Ken Willis and Amanda Blackmore, for their invaluable suggestions; to my teaching colleagues, Greg, Rhonda, Cris, Maxine, Susan and Alison, who gave hours of their time, put up with the recording of their conversations at our meetings, faithfully tried out the planned ideas and honestly evaluated the success of the action plans; and to my family; Peter, Mark and my husband, John, whose support and encouragement helped me to overcome the difficulties of studying as an external student.
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The Background to the Study

One of the major objectives of primary school teachers in Western Australia is helping children acquire writing skills for life. Over the years teachers have been guided by the various curriculums and syllabuses produced by the education authorities. As well as the Ministry of Education W.A. publications, commercially produced material written for teacher reference, such as text books and teacher's guides, have had a significant impact on the way writing has been taught. The differing methods that evolved from the use of these materials have a common goal: that of providing children with the mastery of the required skills so that they can function well in society (W.A. Education Dept, 1936, 1954, 1978; W.A. Ministry of Education, 1989).

Society requires two types of writing, imaginative and factual. Factual texts are referred to by the English Language K-7 Syllabus (1989) as informational texts and are defined as "texts that explain or substantiate ideas, information and opinions in a clear, well-organised manner" (p.49). Five important types of factual texts included in the syllabus are recount, report, procedure, explanation
and exposition. Each of these text types is written for a specific purpose: the recount to retell, the report to inform, the procedure to direct or to describe how to do something, the explanation to explain and the exposition to debate. Depending on the purpose for which each text is written, a particular schematic structure (framework) and specific linguistic features are used (Latham & Sloan, 1990). According to Latham and Sloan, the teaching of informational texts can become more effective by understanding the text organisation and language features unique to each text type and knowing how to write using them. (The purpose, language features and schematic structure of the text types are further explained in Appendix 1.)

However, it is only recently that writers, such as Derewianka (1990), Latham and Sloan (1990) and Jan (1991), have analysed these text types and detailed their schematic structures and linguistic features in such a way as to inform the teaching of them. Prior to 1989, the informational text types stated above were not specified in any primary language syllabus in Western Australia. Thus, the teaching of these text types is posing problems for some teachers as they have not been required to teach them before. In addition, they have not been taught the structures and linguistic features unique to each text type.
Definition of Terms

Informational texts: "Texts that explain or substantiate ideas, information and opinions in a clear, well-organised manner" (Ministry of Education, W.A., 1989, p.49)

Recount: A text that retells, actual events in time order.

Report: A text that classifies, describes, locates and tells about what an animate or inanimate object does or how it operates or functions.

Procedure: A text outlining how something is done. It is written in an ordered sequence.

Explanation: A text that analyses how a thing works or gives reasons for a phenomenon.

Exposition: A text that states beliefs in such a way as to try to convince others to accept a point of view; and to analyse, interpret and evaluate the world around us.

Narrative: A text that tells a story involving a plot with complication and resolution (Latham and Sloan, 1990).
| **Text type:**   | "A specific sort of writing with an unique structure related to the achieving of a particular purpose" (Latham and Sloan, 1990, p.2). The term is used in this document as a generic or family term. |
| **Forms:**      | The forms are the types of writing that belong to the family of the text type, e.g., biographies, diaries, logs, journals are members of the recount text type family. |
| **Schematic structure:** | The distinctive set of stages that make up a text type, and help it to achieve its purpose, e.g., the recount is made up of a setting, events in times sequence and a conclusion. |
| **Framework:**  | The schematic structure (Appendix 1). |
| **Framework categories:** | This term refers to the components of the framework of the text type. |
| **Problem solving:** | The process by which the teacher displays an example of a text type and guides the children by questioning to work out the categories of the framework. |
Process-conference writing: A process for writing that proceeds through the stages of drafting, editing, conferencing, improving, then, publishing.

Free writing: Topics and text type are chosen by the child instead of directed by the teacher.

Modelled writing: The process by which teachers demonstrate to children all the decisions a writer must make during the writing procedure. The teachers usually write on the blackboard or large sheet of paper in front of the children, "thinking aloud" as they write.

Junior school: In this document, this term refers to Years 1-3 students.

Senior school: In this document, this term refers to Years 4-7 students.

Early Literacy Inservice Course (ELIC): A series of workshops held throughout W.A. aimed at updating K-3 teaching practices in the area of literacy.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ELIC-LINK:</th>
<th>A series of workshops run in schools of the Lower Great Southern Region of W.A. to take the ideas and strategies of ELIC into the senior school.</th>
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<td>Ongoing Literacy Inservice Course (OLIC):</td>
<td>A similar programme to the ELIC-LINK which was conducted in the Pilbara.</td>
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<td>English as a Second Language (ESL):</td>
<td>Children who come from homes where English is not spoken as a first language.</td>
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<td>Action Research:</td>
<td>A process of activities aimed at involvement of others in improvement of practice by strategic action. The process involves reflection on the current situation, identifying the thematic concern, planning action, monitoring the action then again reflection as the research continues on its spiral path to improvement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thematic concern:</td>
<td>This is the common concern of the group. It defines the area in which the group will focus its improvement strategies (Kemmis &amp; McTaggart, 1988).</td>
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Statement of Problem

As explained in the background section, teachers in primary schools in Western Australia are being required to teach the writing of informational texts when their knowledge of the writing of such texts is limited and they have few teaching strategies which are appropriate for the teaching of this sort of writing. Therefore, while the rationale and rhetoric are sound, there exist significant problems in the implementation of these changes.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this research is to introduce a group of teachers to the process of action research and to focus on the processes through which they worked in their efforts to improve the writing of informational texts, namely recount, report, procedure, explanation and exposition, in their classes.

Main Research Question

The main question which motivated the research reported here was:

What are the problems encountered by teachers in attempting to teach the writing of informational texts as listed in the English Language K-7 Syllabus (1989)?
Subsidiary Questions

The main question gave rise to the following subsidiary questions:-

a) Why do teachers wish to be involved in a group aimed at trying to learn more about informational texts and how to teach the writing of them?

b) What is happening in classrooms in the area of informational text writing?

c) With regard to what is currently happening in the classroom, what do teachers want to change?

d) What degree of agreement exists among teachers with regard to what they feel needs to be changed?

e) What plan of action do the teachers devise and implement to improve their students' writing?

f) What means of monitoring will the teachers adopt to gauge the effectiveness of their teaching?

g) How will the teachers attempt to implement these plans?
h) What other specific problems will they encounter and how will they overcome them?

i) How will the teachers modify their plan as the project progresses?

j) What support do the teachers need as they implement the plans?

k) In working as members of this group, to what extent will the language and the discourse used by the members change when used in the context of teaching writing?

l) In working together as members of this group, to what extent will their roles in the group, school and community change?

m) In what ways will the conceptual knowledge on the teaching of writing of the team members develop?

n) For the team members, how will their practices for the teaching of writing change?

o) How will teachers integrate the teaching of informational texts into the general curriculum?
p) In working together as members of a group, will the teachers' values regarding the teaching of writing change?

**Overview of the Design of the Study**

Two groups of teachers, from four schools in a country region, were the subjects of this study. All were volunteers. One group was made up of four teachers, who were the complete staff of a remote rural school, and the other group was composed of two teachers from separate schools on the outskirts of the region's largest town. Two of these six teachers were principals, who also taught senior school children, and another of the participants was a library-resource teacher. The majority of the classes taught by these six teachers were grouped year levels, i.e., all students in the junior school were grouped into one class and all the students in the senior school were grouped into another. The range of children, taught by the teachers in this study, was from Years 1-7.

The two groups, known in this report as the Rural School Team and the Mixed School Team, were introduced to the process of action research. They were observed during three meetings of the action research cycles, as they shared issues and concerns, developed a thematic concern,
formulated hypotheses to guide their action, worked out a plan of action, implemented and monitored their plan and, then, shared issues and concerns arising from the implementation. This process repeated itself for two complete cycles, concluding when the teachers’ concerns were no longer common to all members of the team.

**Significance of Research**

As pointed out in the introductory statements in this document, teachers are required by the English Language K-7 Syllabus (1989) to teach informational texts, a type of writing of which they have little knowledge. Therefore, a significant aspect of this study is the improvement of the teachers’ knowledge about informational text writing. This factor should result in a better quality of teaching in this language area and thus an improvement in the students’ writing. As informational texts are the types of writing most used in life, improving the students’ ability to write them will assist these students to function well in secondary school and later in society.

A further significant aspect of this study is the use of the action research model to update teachers’ knowledge and teaching practices. In the past, large amounts of money have been spent on inservicing teachers to update their knowledge. If this professional development could be done
more effectively, then time and money would be saved, along with improving the quality of teaching in our schools. Understanding how teachers receive a workshop and the process they go through as they implement the ideas presented, would assist school development officers and other educators of teachers to improve the quality of the professional development offered.
CHAPTER 2

RELATED LITERATURE

Literature Relating to Method

A possible solution to the problem of the teachers’ limited knowledge about teaching the writing of informational texts, is suggested by Kelly (1985) who claims that teachers are capable of finding answers to their problems by the process of action research. Although not following the rigour of formal educational research, action research can assist "in practical, problem solving" (Kelly, p.131) via a process that fits naturally with normal classroom activities. It does not require the structuring of artificial situations with special treatments for selected groups. All those involved in the practice are involved in its improvement, working collectively to implement change.

This working together of the researcher and the group, each committed to changing themselves and, thus, their educational practices, is a powerful component of action research. Kemmis and McTaggart (1988) point out:

The changing of people—-their ideas, their activities and their social relationships ... is extremely difficult to achieve—especially when "people" are treated as "others" (p.44).
However, during action research the "people" are not "others" but fellow researchers directing their efforts towards educational improvement. Kelly (1985) suggests that this collaborative effort reduces "the communication gap between teachers and researchers" (p. 148) because it forms links between educational theory and educational action thus causing the research to become more acceptable to teachers.

Action research is a sustained process of improvement proceeding in a spiral of steps. It commences with reflection on current practice, sharing concerns and identifying a "thematic concern". Kemmis and McTaggart (1988) define the thematic concern as "the substantive area in which the group decides to focus its improvement strategies" (p. 9). Following initial analysis of the current situation in relation to the thematic concern, the group decides on a plan of action set out in achievable steps. After working out how the effects of the plan will be monitored, the first action step is taken. As the step is implemented, new data come in, giving rise to further reflection, modification of the plan of action and the development of appropriate monitoring procedures. This revised plan forms the second step of the action research spiral. It is then implemented, monitored and evaluated and so the spiral continues, i.e., action, monitoring,
evaluation and replanning, each step of the spiral building on the previous one.

Before commencing the first step of the action research spiral, it is important to reflect. Kemmis and McTaggart (1988) point out that it is necessary to reflect not only on current practices and how they fit into "the wider context of schooling and society" (p.55), but also on the impact that history has had in forming the current educational situation.

In the present action research study, the historical understanding required is the teaching of writing in Western Australian primary schools. The curriculums and syllabuses published by the Ministry of Education have been and still are the main source of direction for the teaching of written expression in Western Australian schools. To hers look to these documents for guidelines on how and when to teach specific skills, and also direction in what to teach, e.g., personal and formal letters (Ministry of Education W.A., 1989).

**Influences on the Teaching of Writing**

Not only do curriculums and syllabuses direct the teaching experiences given to the children by informing the teachers of the processes and content to be taught, but they also
influenced the teacher's personal education in as much as the teachers who taught them were guided by such documents. Thus, resulting from when they were school children themselves, the teachers' past experiences of writing as prescribed by such documents, form the core of knowledge on which their current classroom teaching is based. In this way, a common language about writing is passed on from generation to generation of writers (Mosenthal, cited in Bridge, 1985). If the knowledge about an aspect of writing presented to one generation is inadequate then the quality of knowledge passed on to future generations is affected. Therefore, an understanding of the core of knowledge acquired by the current generation of teachers needs to be gained by reviewing the various curriculums, syllabuses and literature that have influenced the teaching of writing in the past.

The 1936 Curriculum for Primary Schools focussed on giving children a command of basic skills so that they could function well in society. The written expression component saw the writing of informational text as a major requirement of the teaching programme because its intent was to prepare children for writing situations they would encounter in social life and business transactions. Although clear guidelines were given for teaching practice, no guidelines were set out regarding the structures of the
various forms of texts required except for the social letter. It was apparently left to the teacher's knowledge and text books such as A Planned English Course (Candlin, 1948).

The 1954 Curriculum for Primary Schools, Written Expression, focussed on the mastery of rules, e.g., rules of grammar, punctuation, layout, as the means of correct writing production. Although the document specifies the teaching of description and exposition, no direction was given regarding the correct structure for these text types. Again, the teacher was to rely on text books, e.g., Living English (Grace, n.d.), to facilitate the teaching of English and eradicate writing problems related to grammar and form. Many teachers felt comfortable with the text book methods because of their directive nature. This was because both approach and content of lessons were clearly defined.

In Creative Writing in the Primary School (W.A. Educ. Dept., 1969), Chapple opposed the formal methods of the previous years where the mechanics of writing had been taught so rigidly that children were "unable to express themselves in writing which is vital, imaginative, colourful and readable" (p.1). Thus started the functional approach of the 1970s, where the text-book-guided
composition lessons were replaced by free writing around a centre of interest. The skills taught in this approach were determined by the language needs of the child instead of all children working together "through the same arbitrary organised sequence of activities" (W.A. Educ. Dept, 1978, p.7). The Primary English Syllabus (1978) discouraged the use of text books as the central focus of lessons suggesting that teachers work to a flexible plan stimulated by the day-by-day "needs, interests and growth patterns of the pupils" (p.8). Teachers who had felt comfortable with the text book approach expressed concerns about this lack of direction.

The 1980s saw the advent of the process-conference approach to the teaching of writing inspired by researchers such as Graves (1983) and Calkins (1985). Based on the way proficient writers write, the process followed the steps of initial decisions, drafting, revising and editing, publication and reader response (W.A. Educ. Dept. 1985). The teacher’s role in this process became that of facilitator, organiser, and resource person, one who provided models of quality writing and developed conferencing skills to assist the students revise and edit their work. This approach to the teaching of writing caused some teacher concern because of the time and
classroom organisation involved in its implementation (Graves, 1983). This concern still persists in some schools.

The original intention of the process, conference approach (Graves, 1983) was that writing should extend across all curriculum areas and encompass the various types of text. Parry and Hornsby (1985) expressed concern that this was not happening. They stated that children "are only required to write personal narrative" and urged that "function, mode, purpose and form" need also to be considered (p.7). Wilson (1986) expressed concerns that the focus of writing was now publication. This notion was reinforced by the model for process-conference writing presented in the Writing K-7 Teachers' Notes (1985) which is still widely used today. In fact, teachers have adopted this approach to such a degree that Barcan (1987) warns that its early merits have become "distorted, dogmatic and simplified". Teachers are so enthusiastically following the process of the conference approach, cautions Hoogstad (1985), Campagna (1987), and Nolan (1988), that they are no longer directing the children's writing activities. Uncertainty exists about whether to mark out errors in spelling, punctuation, grammar and structure for fear of interfering with the child's creativity. "Children are
writing, conferencing and publishing but not always being taught how to write." (Nolan 1988, p.197).

The freedom of topic selection has resulted in narrative and recount being the most common text types found in children's writing in primary and junior secondary schools. Many students and adults are ignorant of the schematic structures and linguistic elements used to write descriptions, reports, arguments and opinions (Christie, 1987). Another worry is the non-directive nature of the process. The teaching of writing is based on the student's needs. The students write on self-selected topics resulting in an imbalance of experience in the writing of the various types of text and their forms (Martin, Christie & Rothery, 1987). Many teachers feel that more direction and structure are needed in the writing programme.

Compounding these concerns of teachers is the "Back to Basics" cry of the late 1970s and early '80s which is still influencing current thought. According to Parkin (1984), there is concern that graduating students lack basic writing skills to such a degree that many job applicants are unemployable. Prime Minister Fraser (cited in Parkin, 1984,) stated that the education system was to blame "for much youth unemployment in Australia ... : children are sent out of school unable ... to write ... to an
acceptable standard" (p.55). Some critics questioned the competence of teachers and their so called "progressive teaching methods" (Parkin, 1984, p.55). These attacks have made teachers feel confused and led them to question the freedom of the current teaching methods in writing. Many feel that an approach is needed that better prepares children for society by teaching functional forms of writing.

Reinforcing teachers' concerns is the feedback from secondary schools, tertiary institutions and the business world which claim that students do not have the necessary writing skills to satisfy the demands made of them (Parkin, 1984). It is evident that students would benefit from a better quality of writing instruction at primary school level particularly in the areas of informational text writing, the type of writing most demanded by society.

In 1989 the Ministry of Education W.A., guided by the Report of the Committee of Inquiry into Education in Western Australia (Beasley, 1984) and the Better Schools in Western Australia (1986) document, published a new English Language K-7 Syllabus (1989). The writing component of this publication requires the teaching of informational texts, e.g., recount, report, procedure, explanation and exposition (Ministry of Educ. W.A., 1989). This require-
ment is generating a problem in that these text types have not been defined in the syllabuses from 1936 to 1989. This has resulted in many present day teachers having little knowledge of the structure required by the text types outlined in this document. During their education and teacher training, many teachers had not been taught how to recognise and write all these forms. Christie (1987) outlined this as a reason for the lack of comprehensive genre (text type) teaching in Australian schools. Teachers have expressed awareness of their inability to recognise the different text types and thus, to teach them well (Bridge, 1985; Christie, 1987).

This deficiency in teachers' knowledge, and thus teaching practice, is reflected in the standard of the students' ability to recognise and write the various types of informational text required in secondary and tertiary education. Experiments conducted by Cook and Mayer (1988) reveal that college students, in spite of being skilled readers, "are not fully aware of the common types of text structures used in science textbooks" (p.448).

However, students' lack of preparation in schools may not be the only cause. Cambourne (1985) explains that a significant part of the learning process is immersion. Constantly seeing practical examples of text used in
meaningful situations assists a student to learn its structure, use and purpose. If immersion is deficient then learning is hindered. Christie (1987) states that the poor quality of text and reference books used by children in primary schools can take part of the blame for the general lack of knowledge about informational texts. Flood and Lapp (1987) reported that the content of basal readers was almost exclusively literary: 65% of the selections and 72% of the pages in eight programmes studied were either narratives or poems. Expository and nonfiction selections were rarely included. This problem is currently being addressed by publishers such as Ashton Scholastic (Bookshelf Series, 1986) and Macmillan (Southern Cross Series, 1987) with school books that have a balance of narrative and informational texts.

**Strategies for Improving Writing Instruction**

Rivalland (1989) suggests not only should informational texts be in the reading programme to support what is being taught in writing, but the writing of them should be done for a real purpose and for a real audience (Rivalland, 1989). Teachers should use the different subject areas to provide children with purposes and audiences that represent those required in real life.
Rivalland (1989) further asserts that to help children move towards independence in writing, teachers and children should jointly compose texts, interacting with each other to write "communal texts as a way of scaffolding children towards successful writing" (p.19). Working together in this way, via the process of questioning and modelling, teachers can assist children to co-ordinate all the complex cognitive processes involved in writing by demonstrating the successful co-ordination of both linguistic and contextual demands.

Turbill (1987) suggests that the writing programme can be further supported by the teacher reading "a range of different registers" (p.218) to the children as well as demonstrating how each would be written. The success of a learning programme that provides models is supported by a three year case study conducted in one teacher's classroom by Cambourne and Brown (1987). This case study showed that learning could be maximised by the teacher immersing the children in the different text types. This was achieved by reading to them examples of the text type currently being studied, discussing the text organisation in relation to purpose and audience, providing models and demonstrations then supporting the children's attempts at writing by "careful and deliberate intervention" (p.265).
Clearly, these suggestions by Rivalland and Turbill, supported by the research of Cambourne and Brown, are valuable ideas for teaching writing. However, research by Christie (1987) states that teachers have insufficient knowledge of informational text to be able to teach it well. In an attempt to address this problem, Derewianka (1990), Latham & Sloan (1990) suggest the use of frameworks to facilitate and make more effective the teaching of the writing of informational texts. Each of the five informational text types differ in the language used and their overall structure. This structure is referred to by Latham and Sloan (1990) as the text framework and can be used as a composition guide by writers. Therefore, it is suggested that teaching these frameworks to children would empower them to write well. This is supported by the research done by Spivey (1984). However Dixon (1987), Sawyer and Watson (1987), Walshe (1987) and Rivalland (1989) caution that these frameworks, if fragmented instead of being integrated into the whole curriculum, may develop into meaningless teacher-directed exercises. Therefore, it is vital that they should be linked to real life situations, thus increasing the likelihood that children will be able to apply them meaningfully to meet their needs in society.
Need for a Programme to Improve Writing

Regardless of the problems highlighted by Rivalland and others, it is still the case that teachers are expressing concerns regarding their ability to teach the informational texts required by the 1989 English Language K-7 Syllabus. Thus, teachers' knowledge of informational text writing is such that children are disadvantaged and inadequately prepared for the needs placed on them by society. Clearly, a suitable programme is needed to rectify this problem.

The need for such a programme is supported by the results of a recent survey of Educational Standards in Western Australian Government Schools (Ministry of Education, W.A., 1990) which show that at Year 7 and Year 10 levels a "large number of students select inappropriate forms and cannot sustain an appropriate form" nor "maintain an appropriate organising framework for their writing" (p.31). This evidence clearly indicates the pressing need for action to improve teacher knowledge of text types, to improve teaching skills and, thus, to improve the standards of students' writing.
The Design of the Study

Following the guidelines set out by Kemmis and McTaggart (1988) several primary teachers from schools of the Albany District collectively examined current practice, implemented and monitored a cyclical series of action plans in order to improve the quality of the writing of informational text in their classrooms.

Subjects

The teachers participating in this research were volunteers from four schools in a country region. The schools were selected because they had the improvement of written language as the focus for school development in 1991. Teachers were surveyed through personal contact and those who expressed an interest in the project and were prepared to give the extra time required to be involved, were invited to participate in the action research.

The teachers were grouped into two teams, one made up of all of the teachers in a remote rural school, the Rural School Team, and the other consisting of two teachers from individual schools close to the town, the Mixed School Team.
The Rural School Team included:

**Cris:** Thirteen years teaching experience; has attended three inservices on literacy since training: "Process Writing", "Effective Reading in the Content Area (ERICA)" and "Understanding the English Language K-7 Syllabus"; principal of school and Years 4-7 teacher;

**Maxine:** Eight years teaching experience; has attended many inservices since training: "Early Literacy Inservice Course" (ELIC), "Ongoing Literacy Inservice Course" (OLIC), "Process Writing", "Understanding the English Language K-7 Syllabus" to name a few; Years K-3 teacher;

**Alison:** Seven years teaching experience then retired for ten years; has attended no inservices prior to this year when she attended ERICA; currently working one day a week as resource teacher K-7; and,

**Sue:** Eleven years teaching experience (latter four years part time); has kept up-to-date by attending various inservices but only one to do with literacy, i.e., ERICA; currently working as administration relief and support teacher K-7.
The Rural School's enrolment for 1991 was forty-two students, twenty-five in Years K-7 and seventeen in Years 4-7. The three female teachers are permanent residents of the local community. The socio-economic background of the community is stable. Ninety per cent are farmers and the remaining ten per cent are made up of farm workers, National Park Rangers and tavern employees. It is perceived by the teachers that the local community values and supports the school's efforts to improve literacy.

The Mixed School Team consisted of:

Rhonda: Eight years teaching experience; has attended two inservices since training: ELIC and "Making Language Games"; Year 7 teacher in a large primary school with an enrolment of over three hundred students; the socio-economic background is mostly middle class; approximately sixty percent of her class come from farms; there are also three students of aboriginal descent in the class, one pupil from English as a Second Language (ESL) background and one child from an illiterate background; perceives that the parents of her class value and support her endeavours to improve literacy; and,
Greg: Eighteen years teaching experience; has attended one inservice on literacy since training, i.e., ELIC-LINK, a course that took ELIC into Years 4-7; principal of a rural school with an enrolment of sixty seven students and teaches Years 5/6/7; ninety per cent of the school population comes from farms, ten per cent are made up of town children whose parents are labourers or shearers. This is a stable population which recently has become very supportive of the school.

Both principals were seeking promotion and, therefore, wished to be recognised for the quality of their educational leadership. These aspirations motivated their trying of new ideas, the improvement of their own teaching practices and the inducement of their staff to do likewise. This is evident by the Rural School Team principal inspiring all of his staff to be involved in the action research and the Mixed School Team principal inservicing his staff on the writing of informational and narrative texts and sharing with them the innovations resulting from each action research meeting.

It is considered that the participants were representative of the teachers in this Education District. It is an isolated country area where, unless seeking promotion,
teachers tend to stay for long periods of time. Many teachers have been educated in the district, leaving for teacher training then returning to take up teaching posts in the schools where they were educated. This stability of teaching population may be the reason why changes in educational practice tend to be slow. The distance from universities inhibits educational opportunity and stimulus, thus, the teachers of this area rely on the School Development Officers of the District Education Office to keep them up to date with current educational practices.

The teams met independently, one at the remote rural school and the other in the town centre. Three meetings were held at approximately six week intervals, to discuss teaching problems, work out action plans and methods of collecting data. It was hoped that the group would support and encourage each other to improve education in their classrooms and schools.

Role of Researcher

My role varied according to the need of the group. Being the School Development Officer (Language) for the District the participating teachers had certain expectations of me. So mine was a changing role, from expert and leader at the beginning of the project, to support and resource person, then to group member/observer as the group became more
knowledgeable and competent with the process. Although I hoped to slip into a less significant role as the teachers became more familiar with the action research process, I was at times required to play the role of adviser.

During my contact with the teachers throughout the action research process, I was aware that I had an important role to play in creating conditions of trust. It was necessary that the teachers felt at ease with me as a group member, therefore I was anxious not to impose my own judgements on them. Being from the District Education Office, I felt I might be perceived as occupying an evaluative role as in the past years the teachers were evaluated by the District Office Superintendent. "Teachers feel very threatened by persons they perceive as occupying evaluative roles" perhaps because evaluation up to date gave teachers few rights to reply "and is therefore perceived to be a somewhat punitive activity" (Elliott, 1976-77, p.203). So I decided to encourage the teachers to collect their own data as it would be less threatening. I worked on the premise that if the teachers did not feel threatened, they would give a true and accurate account of what was happening in their classrooms and, therefore, would enhance the validity of the research.
The degree to which I managed to achieve this trust can be gauged from the statement of a non-participant observer who was visiting the Rural School to assist the teachers. She attended the Third Cycle Meeting and stated afterwards that she was impressed at how frank and honest the teachers were with their responses to my questions. This excerpt from the Third Cycle Meeting transcript is an example of the frankness and honesty exhibited by the participants:

**Beth:** When we set out the action plan last time, we said we would introduce the text types by helping the children to problem solve the text type framework from an example. Have you used that part of the plan?

**Maxine:** No.

**Beth:** Why not?

**Sue:** (laughing) Couldn’t bear facing it?

**Beth:** That’s fair enough. You’re allowed to give your honest opinion.

**Maxine:** Well I didn’t really understand how I was going to do it, so, as I didn’t understand it, I didn’t do it.

**Cris:** There’s been so much going on in the school. There’s so much happening: school camps, interschool visits, holidays, to name a few, that it’s just filed in the mind and slips away until you finally lose it.

Finding time for extra tasks outside the normal teaching requirements is a big factor in schools. So I took the responsibility of transcribing the action plan from the notes and tape-recording of each meeting and circulating these to each participant. The teachers only then had to
find the time to read the plan and put it into action in their classes.

Role of Participating Teachers
The teachers had the responsibility to carry out the action plan, adapting or modifying it to suit their particular teaching roles in the schools. They were also required to collect data to monitor the plan.

Action Research Tasks
The following tasks were based on ideas put forward by Elliott (1976-77):

1. To identify and diagnose problems that were encountered as teachers tried to implement theory and ideas about informational text writing in their classrooms.

2. To develop and test hypotheses about how these problems might be resolved.

3. To develop planning, teaching and evaluation strategies applicable to the writing of informational texts.

4. To try out these strategies in the classroom to gauge their practicality and explore the extent to which they could be generally applied.
Design and Data-collection

The study was naturalistic in orientation with the researcher and teachers working together to solve the problem of how to teach informational texts to children. A collaborative problem solving approach was used to identify and diagnose the concerns. This approach followed that outlined by MacDonald and Walker (1976) quoted by Elliott (1976-7):

In the Problem-solver perspective the receiver ... indicates the process of change by identifying an area of concern or by sensing a need for change. Once the problem is identified, the receiver undertakes to alter the situation either through his own efforts, or by recruiting outside assistance ... the receiver in the P-S model is actively involved in finding an innovation to solve his own problem ... The relationship between sender and receiver is one of collaboration (p.196).

The essential features of this approach, employed by the action research teams, was to collaborate with an outsider (the researcher), discuss their problems and work out solutions. The researcher then assisted the teams to formulate a hypothesis, work out steps of action and monitor this plan of action as it was implemented.

The monitoring was done by collecting data from three different aspects: teacher field notes recorded regularly in a journal, pupil questionnaires supplemented by teacher-student discussion and written documents in the form of the
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children’s writing. This triangulation process of gathering data from three different sources was to help the teachers gain a truer appreciation of what was happening in their classes. The journals recorded how well the teachers felt their lessons had been taught and received by the pupils. The pupil questionnaire recorded the success of the lessons from the pupils’ point of view and the written work, as the actual product, demonstrated how well the teacher and pupil had jointly performed.

**Personal-professional journals (field notes).** Personal accounts, on topics of interest or concern, were kept by the teachers on a regular basis. These journals contained observations, feelings, interpretations and reflections about the lessons the teachers had given on informational text writing.

When planning the first cycle, sampling cards were made. These cards had headings to assist selection of issues to be recorded. The teachers decided on eleven issues: clarity of lesson, teaching strategies, pupil participation, negative behaviour, positive behaviour, negative points in children’s writing, positive points in children’s writing, resources, editing, evaluation of children’s ability to follow the text frameworks and improvement noted in children’s writing. At the end of
each day, it was planned that the teacher would shuffle the cards and select two or three cards from the top of the pack. Points were to be recorded on observations to do with these topics, then the cards were to be placed on the bottom of the pack and again shuffled.

However, when the teachers came to put this method into practice they preferred to note freely their observations of and reflections about the students' writing, rather than be restricted by the planned method of recording.

Included in these notes were the teachers' emotional responses to the pupils' learning experiences. As suggested by Beasley (1981), these records can throw an important light on the teachers' values and assumptions about education. The following quotes from journals are typical entries:

*Sue:* Children are working on the English Speaking Board Talk. Great to see the children using the frameworks of report, procedure and recount to help them prepare their talks.

I am really pleased with the children's recognition of need to have structure and therefore organisation in their work. They are prepared to tackle the thinking parts—introductions and conclusions (20.08.91).

*Alison:* Most Years 4-7 handed in well presented, well ordered reports. All facts were in correct paragraphs. Two of the weaker ones had trouble making sentences out of the facts. The second attempt at writing a report was better than the initial one. Most of the children can comprehend what is required
and follow the task through to completion. I was very pleased with rate of progress (Sept, 1991).

On reflection, the teachers found their journal entries of value:

Rhonda: It’s interesting to read back through your journal. You can see that you are not struggling all the time, and that you have come a certain distance because you are achieving things. Because this type of writing is so new to me I don’t know whether I am doing it correctly or not. When you read back through it you think, "Well, I’m not doing so badly!". You can see where you started from and can see the progress you have made.

A personal-professional journal was also kept by the researcher. It contained the researcher’s observations, reflections, concerns and interpretations of the participants’ responses at the meetings. From these notes, follow-up action was taken, e.g., asking participants for clarification of points made at the meeting. These notes were also valuable as a cross-checking device during the writing of this report. The researcher’s notes were checked against the participants’ journal entries and the transcripts of the meetings.

**Pupil questionnaire.** As the pupils are in a good position to give feedback with regards to the success of the writing lessons, the opportunity was given for them to reflect and evaluate their response to the lessons. This was done by using a Pupil Questionnaire (Appendix 2a).
During the action research, modifications were made to the original Pupil Questionnaire to make it more specific to the requirements of the teachers (Appendices 2b-g).

The use by the teachers of the pupil questionnaire varied from nil to regular usage for analysing students' reception of the lesson. The teachers who used it found it was interesting to see the progress of the children from dependent on the teacher to independent of the teacher. This progress was gauged by the pupils' response to the question, "Who gave you this help?". At the commencement of the study, the children responded, "the teacher". At the end of the study many replied to the question, "other group members." This factor was particularly evident in Greg's class who focused on working as a team with his students to improve their knowledge of writing.

The majority of the teachers saw the value of the questionnaire but needed confidence to use it, as it is not a general practice to have students evaluating the teacher's lessons. Their opinions can be summed up by the following comment:

Rhonda: Although I have not yet used the Pupil Questionnaire, I can see that it would be a real spin
off for students to believe we actually valued their opinion and would build their self esteem up in the air.

Rhonda’s problem was similar to the majority of the other teachers. She was still learning about the text types and was going through a learning process to teach them. She was not confident in her ability to teach them well and did not want the extra threat of having the class evaluate her lessons. Her lack of confidence was expressed at the Second Cycle Meeting:

Rhonda: I think I chose three text types, and then from one of those I chose two forms—as I had five areas I wanted to work on for the term. Then I found I wasn’t confident ... I kept leaving it, avoiding it and going off and teaching something else and adding other things to my programme.

However, by the third cycle all but one teacher had used the pupil questionnaire and were responding to the needs expressed by the students.

**Teacher-student discussion.** Teachers were encouraged to interview students with regard to the teaching programme’s successes and problems. The journal and children’s own writing were used as a resource for these discussions.

The Year K-3 teacher found this was a better way of finding out the children’s reactions to her lessons because the
youngsters were too eager to please and were not answering the pupil questionnaire truthfully. By using the questionnaire as a guide as she discussed the lesson with the child during conferencing, Maxine felt she was getting a truer response:

Maxine: A couple of times when we used the Pupil Questionnaire, I didn’t really think that the junior children understood what I was asking them—even though I had gone through each part explaining, for example, that "No" means you have no idea and "some" means that you have some idea. So now I’m just doing a verbal thing with each child when they come out to conference their work.

Observation. Classroom observations by the researcher were arranged with three of the teachers who felt confident enough to be observed. The observations were based on the action plan to see how it was being implemented, and also whether the teacher was using an integrated approach to the teaching of informational texts or whether the frameworks were being taught as a teacher-directed exercise, unrelated to life. The data gathered in this manner were compared with the statements the teachers made during interviews and discussions at the meetings. This was done to test the reliability of the teachers’ claimed lesson content. The following is a statement made by Greg at the third cycle meeting regarding his method of teaching editing:

Greg: After writing I give the children lessons on editing by holding a "Victor Vulture Session", where we pull each other’s work apart in a friendly way. I
usually photocopy a child’s work onto an overhead projector transparency and we work together to improve it. Recently, I did a different "Victor Vulture". I wrote a child’s story three times on large sheets of paper. I split the class up into three groups and I chose three leaders. I said, "You run with it. Do what you like." So we had different things happening within the groups, but basically they had a "Victor Vulture" on the work.

Then we got back together as a whole class and we talked about what they had done. One of the groups actually managed to get right through the editing, two of the groups didn’t. At the end of it we talked about what had happened in their groups and then each group leader, or someone in the group read out what they had done.

I observed Greg’s lesson and this is an account from my journal:

Saw a very healthy lesson on editing. The children were not only correcting punctuation and sentence structure but worked at improving the text organisation to make the meaning clearer. Greg’s "Victor Vulture Session" is obviously enjoyed by the children and is improving not only their ability to edit, but also developing their ability to talk about writing. Children used comments like "That’s direct speech so it needs quotation marks" and "Read it aloud again. We haven’t got the punctuation right yet". The children also displayed respect for the child who had written the piece by asking what she meant to say, and whether she approved of their intended changes.

Of the teachers I observed, there was a high correlation between what the teachers said they were doing and what was actually happening in their classrooms.

Written documents. Examples of children’s writing were collected pre-action research (baseline) and during the teaching of each text type. The baseline writing was
analysed to evaluate the children’s ability to select an appropriate text type for the task, and whether they could maintain the appropriate organisational framework for their writing. This piece of writing also turned out to be a valuable analysis of the teacher’s knowledge of the text types:

Rhonda: Well my big hassle was trying to work out what text type they had written and none of the pieces of writing exactly followed any one of the frameworks.

Maxine: I still haven’t analysed the base line writing. I guess I don’t feel confident in my ability to judge yet.

The majority of the teachers had this problem. Only two teachers (Greg and Sue) felt confident in their ability to categorise the text types, even by the third cycle of the research.

The analysis of the writing was recorded on checklists made by the teachers as a team to assist in the evaluation and recording (Appendix 3). Although the focus of this research was on the improvement of informational writing, the narrative was included on the checklists because some children chose this text type instead of the appropriate informational text type for the baseline task of writing about an animal.
Before and after the teaching of each framework the children's writing was analysed to evaluate their ability to follow the required structure and these results were recorded. The purpose of this exercise was for the teachers to gauge the progress of their students by comparing their first pieces of writing with their last efforts.

**Teacher questionnaire and interview.** Before attending the first meeting, the participants were asked, in a letter, to write responses to five questions (Appendix 4) thus recording what they are currently teaching with regard to informational texts, and their feelings towards the proposed research. This data had the intended purpose of preparing the teachers for the first action research cycle. A telephone interview was also conducted to gather information concerning the subjects and participants (Appendix 5).

**Tape-recording.** Tape-recordings of each action research meeting were made and transcribed. The transcriptions were checked by the participants for accuracy.
Impact of Data

Data collection had impact at three stages of the action research process:

1. The problem identification stage where it was used as a source of information for formulating the thematic concern and also to form the baseline for comparison with data collected at the evaluation stage.

2. The problem analysis stage where clarification of issues was required.

3. The evaluation stage where the evidence gathered in the teachers' classroom was analysed and compared with the baseline formed at stage one.

Data Analysis Procedures

Simple analyses, mostly subjective, were used. The data analysis proceeded on two levels. The first level was the teachers' analysis of data gathered in their classrooms, via observation (recorded in personal-professional journals), pupil questionnaires or pupil interviews, and the students' written work. The purpose of the analyses was to enable the teachers to obtain a closer understanding
of the effect of their action research plan and, thus, form a basis for future planning.

The second level was the analysis of data collected by the researcher. The source of the data was the transcripts of the tape recordings made of the three meetings; notes, including classroom observations, recorded in the researcher's personal-professional journal; the participants' responses to questionnaires and interviews; and, the teachers' personal-professional journals. The boundaries, used to categorise and analyse the data, were the research questions, main and subsidiary, and the steps of the action planned at each meeting. These stages of action were in direct response to the problems the teachers encountered as they implemented strategies for teaching informational text writing.

**Limitations of the Study**

This study focussed on teachers as they worked out their problems resulting with the implementation of new teaching strategies aimed at improving the children's writing. The process they used was action research. Action research is different from other research as it is concerned with solving a local problem in a local setting. "It is not concerned with whether the results are generalizable to any other setting and is not characterized by the same kind of
control evident in other categories of research" (Gay, 1987, p.8).

In the research reported here, I, the researcher, was more interested in what the participants were doing, in order to gain a better understanding of how teachers receive a workshop and implement ideas from a workshop, and less interested in the total teaching population of which this group was a small sample. However, to gain as accurate a picture as possible, I took precautions to overcome the following weaknesses in this study:

1. I was aware that my role of School development Officer for the Education District may be a limitation in this research. How I endeavoured to overcome this problem, and the degree to which I succeeded in gaining the teachers' trust, has already been discussed on page 43.

2. Another problem I recognised was that of the researcher having to rely on the testimony of the participants. The data collection in this study relied heavily on the transcripts of the recordings of the meetings. Being aware that the statements made at these meetings may be coloured for the purpose of impressing the teachers' colleagues or me, I took the precaution of also
using data collected from other areas. I confirmed the participants' testimonies at the meetings by a system of cross checking. This was done by: viewing the teachers' journals, students' writing, informal visits to the school, informal interviews by telephone, and classroom observations. The latter I found the least valid as teachers put on a special lesson for me.

3. A further problem perceived was the bias of the researcher. Being the School Development Officer Language K-7, obviously I wanted to improve writing in the schools. However, I endeavoured to collect and collate the data in such a way as to represent a true perspective of the processes the teachers went through during this research. The accuracy of this report was confirmed by the reading of its final draft by all participants. Changes were made to any details requested by these teachers. This accurate representation was important to me as I wanted to find out what teachers do after receiving a workshop, in order to improve future professional development offered to schools.
CHAPTER 4

FIRST CYCLE

Commencement of the Research
This action research project commenced May, 1991. Expressions of interest were called from teachers who were concerned about their teaching of writing and wished to participate in a research project assisting them to improve their classroom practice in this teaching area.

Preparation for the First Cycle
Prior to the first meeting a letter was sent to all interested teachers outlining the action research process and commitment required. The letter also requested the teachers to collect samples of their children’s writing by asking their students to: "Choose an animal. Write about it, telling as much as you can about the animal you have chosen." (Appendix 4).

This exercise was aimed at establishing whether children could freely choose the correct text type for a specific purpose. These data were intended to form the base line for comparison of the children’s writing at the end of year. The samples of work were also a useful indicator of how much the teachers themselves knew about these text
types. The quality of their knowledge was gauged by the degree of difficulty they had in analysing the children’s writing. These data formed a basis for discussion on the concerns about writing at the first action research meeting.

Another aspect of the letter was to ask the participants to examine themselves as teachers, by reflecting on and writing answers to the following questions:

1. Why is this area of enquiry important to you?

2. Why do you think it is important to your students?

3. What is happening in your class in this area at the moment?

4. What do you want to change?

5. Why do you want to change this?

(Beasley & Riordan, 1981)

The purpose of the written responses to these questions was to stimulate the teachers to reflect on their situation in preparation for Step 1 of the First Cycle: the Reconnaissance. During this session these responses were shared
to assist the formulation of the thematic concern.

Also prior to the first meeting, an unstructured interview (with question content, question sequence and wording determined by the interviewer) was conducted by telephone with the participants (Appendix 5). The content focused on gaining an understanding of the things the teachers valued and what they perceived was valued by the students and their parents. It also explored the concerns the teachers had with their current writing programmes. These data were used to investigate what the thematic concern might be and to guide the procedure of the first meeting of the teams.

The responses to the questions aimed at gauging the value the children and community placed on the writing component of the literacy programme, were of interest. All teachers felt their parents valued literacy and would be supportive of the project to improve their children’s writing. However, with regard to the children valuing written expression, the majority felt their children did not. The following are samples of the responses:

*Rhonda:* I very much doubt if they do consciously.

*Cris:* It’s work—a hassle. They see no purpose in writing. After the first draft it’s a battle to get them to polish it.
In contrast two teachers felt their children valued writing:

*Maxine:* A lot look forward to it—exploring their own ideas and thoughts.

*Greg:* In talking to them—they understand the importance of it. We talk about the reasons for doing things.

Greg stated he often talked to his children about how they felt about the writing programme. He felt they were a team. In comparison, the other teachers rarely discussed their class’s feelings about writing. The factor of valuing the classes opinion was later reflected by the teachers’ use of the pupil questionnaire during the implementation of the action plans. One teacher felt too threatened to use it at all while another found it was a valuable resource to gauge the response to the lessons and evaluate the areas of concern. As the teachers’ confidence improved they became more open to pupil feedback and started to work with their students as a co-operative learning community.

**Catalyst for Change**

The catalyst for the project was a workshop on "Strategies for Teaching Children How to Write Narrative and Informational Texts" conducted by Dr Ross Latham and Dr Peter Sloan, two acknowledged experts in the field. The intention was to provide the theory and knowledge necessary
for the teachers to begin to consider changing their classroom practices in the teaching of informational writing.

The Rural School team was unable to attend the Latham and Sloan workshop because of the distance from the venue. Therefore, I took extensive notes of the strategies presented so that two days later I could reproduce the workshop as closely as possible for them.

**Report of First Meeting**

Three weeks after the workshop on "Strategies For Teaching Children How to Write Narrative and Informational Texts", the first meetings of the action research teams took place. Although the Rural School Team and the Mixed School Team met independently the procedure of the meetings was basically the same. Their responses have been collated for the purpose of this report. The research questions were used as boundaries for data collection and appear in this report in italics.
Step 1: Reconnaissance: Sharing Issues of Concern

The initial meeting of the teachers commenced with the sharing of the written responses to the questions asked in the letter to participants.

a) Why is this area of enquiry important to you? Why do you think it is important to your students?

The purpose of these two questions was to find out why the teachers wished to be involved in a group aimed at learning more about informational texts and the teaching of writing them, the first subsidiary question of our research. The questions were also to gain an understanding of why the teachers valued the focus of the action research, the improvement of informational writing, and to allow them to express their concerns and problems.

According to the teachers' answers, the research focus was highly valued. The importance they placed on it is expressed by this teacher’s written response:

Sue: Students are at school to acquire skills. Using writing of informational text types is going to give them sound structural basis for research and later study.

All teachers perceived that their job in the primary school was to prepare the children for the following year levels
and for high school. Although Maxine’s Year K-3 students were many years from high school she felt its influence:

Maxine: It’s important to prepare the children... to start teaching these things they will need later on to set them up for high school.

The need for students to be well prepared for secondary school was creating concerns. Currently, the teachers were not happy with their knowledge of informational texts and felt unable to teach them well. The following quotations sum up the concerns of the majority of the teachers:

Rhonda: I know nothing about the frameworks of informational text types required by the English Language K-7 Syllabus. The writing syllabus prior to the new one did not tell you the correct way to teach these forms. It’s okay not to be prescriptive but you must have the knowledge to teach well.

Greg: I desire more knowledge. I was concerned that my children were not meeting the requirements of the secondary school so I contacted the English Master there. He recommended a book that I found very helpful. Up until then I was scratching for knowledge on the correct mechanics (schematic structure and linguistic elements) to use.

Alison: I like the idea of the students being given direction, being given a framework to base their work on... to give direction so that children know that they have achieved what they set out to achieve—self marking in a way.

Sue: In our grouped classes there is a real need for our children to develop independent work habits. The informational text structures (frameworks) will enable the children to focus their work in research and therefore work independently.

The teachers also had various personal reasons why the research was important to them and their students. These
reasons related to their teaching positions in the school. The Year 7 teachers wished to prepare students well for high school. The resource teacher wanted to improve the children’s ability to do projects, i.e., to research, note—take and write on topics. The principals wished to foster learning continuity between the different year levels in the school. They also valued the research as it supported their school development plans.

b) What is happening in classrooms in the area of informational text writing?

The majority of teachers stated that they currently taught writing using the Process-Conference approach as outlined in the Writing K-7 Teachers Notes (1985). There was little direction in what the children were to write as they generally chose their own topics although at times the teachers gave their students topics to write on. Informational text writing was limited to the occasional letters, business and social, reports which were really recounts and projects. The projects were taught by the resource teacher in this way:

Alison: They chose what they were interested in—chose a topic, followed it through—an introduction, a bit of information then a conclusion.

Beth: How did you know what steps to follow?
Alison: I didn’t. I just relied on common sense. I had to give the children something to hang on.

The marking and evaluation of writing also relied on common sense. Some teachers used guidelines put out by district office advisory staff. Others looked at what the children couldn’t do and treated these errors in Formal English lessons at another time-slot in the weekly programme.

This fragmentation existed also between curriculum areas. Generally, there was a lack of flow of the language programme into other subject areas. For example, social studies was not normally regarded as an opportunity to teach reading and writing. The reading programme was not usually presented in a way supportive of the writing programme. For example, reading various forms of recounts to study this type of text did not precede the teaching of recount writing. This was particularly a problem in the senior level of the Rural School because the components of language area were shared between three teachers: Alison for library research skills and project writing, Sue for writing, and Cris for Formal English (grammar) and reading. Maxine, Rhonda and Greg had a less fragmented approach, using large time-slots to teach language: speaking, listening, reading and writing.
The evaluation of the students' written work was based on the teachers' own judgement. Generally, the use of full stops, capital letters and correct spelling were the only areas evaluated. Other than these areas, there appeared to be little continuity in writing evaluation between the different teachers. The students' ability to structure each text type, following the appropriate schematic structure, was not evaluated as all the teachers in the research teams had no knowledge of these frameworks prior to the Latham and Sloan Workshop.

c) With regard to what is currently happening in the classroom, what do teachers want to change?

The majority of the teachers desired more direction and structure to their teaching. The current free writing approach resulted in an imbalance between writing for the purpose of entertainment, narrative, and writing for factual purposes, informational texts. The former was done more than the latter. Most teachers did not teach informational writing at all, other than the occasional business letter and project writing.

Maxine: My children only do letter writing for life. I haven't taught them these sort of things [informational texts].

Rhonda: I don't teach any of this in my classroom because I know nothing about informational text
writing. It’s all new to me ... At the moment my teaching of writing lacks structure. I stab at things I know, which is mostly narrative--stories, poems--some letters and posters. But there is more to writing than this!

All of the teachers wanted to change their writing programme to include informational texts. To do this, they needed to improve their own knowledge of the schematic structures and specific linguistic features appropriate to each text type. The anticipated results were that the children would be better able to write informational texts, following a structure that would not only give direction to the students' writing but would also improve their paragraphing skills. The "hoped-for spin-offs" were the improvement of the students' proofing and editing skills, and a more consistent way of evaluating writing.

d) What degree of agreement existed among teachers with regard to what they felt needed to be changed?

Development of thematic concern. The concerns expressed during the reconnaissance stage as outlined above were common to all participating teachers, even though the Rural School and Mixed School Teams met independently. During the discussion of these concerns, there was a need to develop a common language so that all participants could communicate meaningfully.
Beth: So what do you believe are our joint concerns? I'll write them down on the chart so we can all see them.

Greg: One, I think, is the basic knowledge ...

Rhonda: Teacher knowledge.

Greg: Improving teaching knowledge of the mechanics of writing.

Beth: What do you mean by that?

Greg: Well I guess if you say that the primary thing is to improve our students own mechanics of writing. This all needs to be a part of that, doesn't it?

Rhonda: I'd like to see something that shows that we don't have the understanding, therefore we can't impart that to our class.

Greg: Improving our knowledge of the mechanics of writing?

Beth: What do you actually mean by the mechanics of writing?

Greg: Umm...

Rhonda: I've written down "I want to be able to implement and teach informational text writing to my students because I am ignorant".

Beth: Do you mean the framework? The actual setting out of the structure...?

Rhonda: Yes, I mean the different types.

Greg: That's what I mean by mechanics.

Beth: You see the mechanics to me means the full stops and capital letters and so on.

Rhonda: Forms of writing.

Beth: ... but you are meaning the frameworks, aren't you?

Rhonda & Greg: Yes. Frameworks.
Greg: We’ve got to get the correct words.

Beth: So we want to improve our knowledge of writing. Now what were you saying about the children?

Greg: To me that is the prime objective. We’ve got to do that to get to where I want to go. I want to improve the children’s own knowledge of writing -- that is the frameworks.

I could also add another one to that. I guess along with that, we are really improving our own knowledge of ... I can’t get the right word ... improving our knowledge of ... punctuation?

Rhonda: Accepted standard of ...

Greg: Improving grammatical knowledge ...

Beth: Conventions of print?

Greg: All right, that will be fine.

The discussion of concerns resulted in the formulation of the thematic concern, i.e., the area on which the teachers would focus their research.

**Thematic concern.** The main area of concern was how to implement effectively the knowledge gained at the Latham and Sloan Workshop on “Strategies for Teaching Children How to Write Narrative and Informational Texts”.

The following are the issues that were addressed:

1. We need to improve our knowledge of the frameworks for the different types of informational texts required by the **English Language K-7 Syllabus**.
2. We also need to improve our knowledge of the conventions associated with the different types of texts, i.e., grammar, punctuation, paragraphing and so on.

The expressing of the thematic concern led to the teachers formulating a hypothesis to guide their own research.

**Hypothesis to guide the teachers' research.** If our knowledge of the frameworks of informational writing and the conventions associated with the different text types improves, then the children's writing will also improve in these areas.

**Step 2: Our Action Plan**

e) What plans of action did the teachers decide to implement to improve their writing?

Following the setting of the long term objective, in the form of the hypothesis the next step was to negotiate a plan of action.

The resulting action plan focused on introducing the text type the children use naturally, i.e., the recount. The teachers felt that this was the one with which the children
and they were most familiar as during many news and writing sessions the children retold events that had happened to them in life.

*Cris:* What I'm suggesting is that if children do recount naturally, then maybe that would be a nice easy one to leap into and we could see how we go with that, rather than go into something that is going to be tough to start with.

*Sue:* I've already had a go at it. It's good for introducing paragraphing.

Paragraphing was one of the desired improvements in the children's writing, so the recount was chosen as an appropriate framework to teach this.

The action plans of the two teams differed slightly. The Mixed School Team was anxious to start by evaluating the base-line writing to ascertain the children's knowledge of informational texts, whereas, the Rural School wished to leave the evaluation until the teachers' knowledge improved, thereby, facilitating the process.

The following is the Mixed School Team’s action plan which was identical to the Rural School’s plan except for the analysis of the base-line writing:

1. We will analyse the children’s writing we collected as a baseline prior to the Sloan and Latham workshop. The analysis will occur along the following lines:
i) The writing will be sorted under the categories of the text type chosen. A class record will be kept, recording the types used. (Appendix 3).

ii) The text types will be analysed on their correctness of framework construction. A record of each child's ability to follow the steps of the framework chosen will be kept. (Appendix 3a-f).

2. After the weaknesses have been analysed we will choose one area and take whole class lessons. It was decided to teach the recount framework first as it is the one with which the children are most familiar as they use it regularly in news sessions.

3. Children to follow the recount framework of setting (who, when, where and why), event 1, event 2, and so on, and ending, in all oral activities which require the retelling (recounting) of actual events in time order e.g., news sessions, class activity sharing and so on.

4. When children visit the resource centre they will be shown the various forms of recount that are in the library, e.g. newspapers, letters, biographies, diaries, logs, journals, and so on.

5. When children have generally displayed ability to follow the recount framework orally, a written example of a recount will be shown on the blackboard or overhead projection. The children will be asked to discover, through problem solving, the structure of the recount. The teacher will guide them with questions if needed. The framework will be written on the blackboard as it is "discovered".

6. The teacher will model how he/she follows the framework to write a recount. During this process the selection of topics and appropriate words will also be modelled.

7. The class will have a go at following the recount framework to write on their own topic selected from a recent event.

8. Sitting in a circle, the teacher and children will share what they have written.
9. Response to the writing will be firstly on its value to the audience, e.g. information, enjoyment, and so on, and then against the criteria of whether it followed the correct structure of the recount, i.e., a paragraph for the setting, each event and the ending.

This plan of action was comprised of strategies suggested by Turbill (1987), Cambourne and Brown (1987), Rivalland (1989), Derewianka (1990), and Latham and Sloan (1990) which have been previously outlined in this document on page 35.

After formulating the steps of action, the next stage was to set out how to monitor the implementation.

f) What means of monitoring did the teachers adopt to gauge the effectiveness of their teaching?

Planning for monitoring. The following is the monitoring plan for data collection adopted by the participating teachers:

1. The children's writing will be evaluated on whether they are able to correctly structure a recount using a paragraph for the setting, events and ending (See Appendix 1),

2. Observations will be entered in our personal-professional journals after:
   a) analysis of the students base-line writing on "the animal",
   b) oral sessions following the recount framework, c) the modelling session, d) the children's sharing session, and
e) the analysis of the children’s recount writing.

For easy entry and to save time, short jottings will be made on two or three selections from the following: clarity of lesson, teaching strategies, pupil participation, negative behaviour, positive behaviour, negative points in children’s writing, positive points in children’s writing, resources, editing, children’s ability to follow the framework, teacher’s personal development, and, teacher’s fears, concerns, celebrations of success, and so on.

3. Some teachers want to use the pupil questionnaire. They will make modifications to suit particular needs. The use of the questionnaire will be discussed next session.

The first cycle meeting concluded with the teachers arranging to meet in six weeks’ time. The length of this period was to allow enough time for a steady implementation of the programme.
Reflections of the Researcher after the First Cycle Meeting

j) What support do teachers need as they implement the plan?

k) In working as members of this group, to what extent will the language and the discourse used by the members change when used in the context of teaching writing?

l) In working together as members of this group, to what extent will the participants' social relationship change?

Language and discourse. On reflection there is an obvious need to develop a common language to discuss writing, otherwise we will have different interpretations of the issues put forward. Teachers are unsure of the terminology of "text types", "forms", "frameworks" and "structure" when talking about a recount, report, and so on. When talking about the text types, the teachers are not conversant with the schematic structure or language features specific to each.

Activities and practices. Only one teacher, Greg, had done something about his lack of knowledge with regard to his writing programme prior to the Latham and Sloan workshop. He had been unsatisfied with what he was doing,
to such an extent that he had contacted the English Master at the high school to find out more about improving his knowledge about the teaching of writing. The information he had received enabled him to develop a better writing programme, particularly in the areas of punctuation and grammar:

Greg: I had been searching for more information so I went to the high school and they recommended a text. It had a lot of jargon and was not easy to read but it certainly had a lot of my answers there.

When Greg attended the Latham and Sloan workshop he was seeking more knowledge:

Greg: I learnt so much from the workshop. Those frameworks were just what I wanted. Every time I read the booklet they gave out, I pick up more information. I think it is one of those things that you have to keep going back to, and each time you get more out of it. There were a lot of doubts in some of the areas that I was teaching--mainly technical things--just imparting knowledge to students. I think it is important I keep informed. In two weeks’ time I am going to inservice my staff.

Greg was the only participant who felt confident about teaching writing. The other participants still felt uncertain about their ability to teach informational texts in spite of having attended a one day inservice. They had the knowledge but needed assistance in putting it into practice.
It was of interest to me as an observer to see how structured the teachers made their first plan. They wanted to know what to teach and how to go about it, i.e., a step-by-step procedure to get them started. This required a high input by me. I needed to play the role of the specialist, telling the group how to go about linking the separate components of the language programme, speaking, listening, reading and writing. However, I believe this was to be expected as the majority of the teachers taught these components as separate areas of the language programme and needed help to operate otherwise.

**Social relationship: researcher.** During this first action cycle I was forced to play a dominant role, asking questions, giving information and directing the meeting. This I suppose was to be expected as I was considered to be the leader and "expert", i.e., a role relating to my position as School Development Officer. In this capacity, I had worked with all teachers previously and with them had developed a friendly relationship. However, one participant did not find sharing an easy process. On discussing this with her, she explained she was better at writing her thoughts than expressing them orally. This was supported by the quantity of discerning entries in her journal.
Social relationship: participants. The rapport between participants was good—both supportive and encouraging. Greg and Rhonda of the Mixed School Team had equal input. Maxine and Alison were the more dominant members of the Rural School although sometimes Cris played the Principal’s role by making decisions for the group.

At one time regarding the action plan:

*Cris*: I think the whole school should pick out a framework and implement that.

and regarding the pupil questionnaire:

*Cris*: As we are running out of time, I’d like to suggest that we could talk about this amongst ourselves, and make that decision about what we do with it.

As Cris was the recognised leader of the school, this dominant role was to be expected. Greg, on the other hand was not Rhonda’s principal and, therefore, did not dominate. Instead he played the role of a fellow senior school teacher working with a colleague to plan and research action that would improve the teaching of writing.

The two teams were enthusiastic about this style of research and left the First Cycle Meeting keen to put the plan into action.
Discussion and Findings from the First Cycle

m) In what ways will the conceptual knowledge on the teaching of writing of the team members develop?

n) For the team members, how will their practices for the teaching of writing change?

o) How will teachers integrate the teaching of informational texts into the general curriculum?

p) In working together as members of a group, will the teacher's values regarding the teaching of writing change?

The purpose of this study was to observe the processes through which teachers worked in their efforts to improve the writing of informational. To do this, it was first necessary to understand the teachers' current knowledge, practices and values with regard to writing.

The sharing of concerns during the first cycle meeting and the resulting action research plan revealed the following facts:
Knowledge. Prior to the Latham and Sloan workshop the teachers had no knowledge of the frameworks of the informational text types. This lack of knowledge prevented them from teaching this type of writing well.

Practices. Currently language was taught in a fragmented way. The text type was not practised orally nor exposed to the children in written form during reading sessions prior to or in conjunction with the teaching of the writing of this type of text. There was little correlation between the different components of the language curriculum.

The writing component of the language curriculum gave little direction to the teachers on what to teach. They relied on common sense to direct their teaching and evaluation of writing. What the teachers taught was in proportion to what the teachers valued and knew about writing.

Values. The teachers recognised that students needed these text types in life and should be taught the specific skills to write them. They believed that improving their own knowledge of writing would benefit their students. Therefore they valued the idea of participating in a group to improve the teaching of informational texts. It is
apparent that teachers are amenable to change if they perceive it will benefit their students.

It was clear from the teachers' comments that a one day inservice to update knowledge was not enough to cause significant change. To implement change in the classroom a step-by-step plan, put together with the guidance of an expert, was needed to show teachers how to get started, i.e., how to link the components of the language curriculum together in such a way that each supported the other to form a powerful model of teaching. In the first cycle plan, this is what the group attempted to do.
Step 3: Implementation of the Plan: Action, Observation and Reflection

g) How did the teachers attempt to implement the plan?

Six weeks passed before the participants met again to share their observations, resulting from monitoring the implementation of the plan, and the problems they had experienced. The first step of the plan was to analyse the children’s baseline writing under the categories of the text type chosen, i.e., whether the children had written reports, recounts and so on. Next they were to analyse the text types for correctness of construction. Three of the teachers attempted this analysis and were confronted with similar problems:

Rhonda: My big hassle was trying to work out what text type they had written and none of the pieces of writing exactly followed any one of the frameworks. Mostly they came out as being close to the report. I found it difficult because, of the five things a report has, the students might only have three or four and they didn’t fit into the categories.

Greg: I started off using a statistical approach like 7 out of 8 children could do this. Then when I sat down and thought about it there were some grey areas in between. Were they really doing this or not?

It appears there were two causes to this problem. One was the teachers’ current unfamiliarity with the text types and the second was the children’s past habit of writing without
following any specific framework. The combination of these two factors made analysis difficult as the students’ writing had little schematic structure to assist the teacher in categorising the different text types and analysing the structure.

The following statement from Sue’s journal is typical of the findings of the three senior school teachers as they analysed their students’ baseline writing:

All the children, except one, wrote a type of report. Half the children used paragraphs. The majority did not have the classification paragraph nor the summarising comment. The details in the other categories of the framework were "not very thorough" with "big gaps in the information given in description, location and dynamics" (Sue, 1991).

The Year 1-3 children’s writing was not analysed as the teacher felt her knowledge of the text types was not yet adequate to make judgements.

After analysis of the work, the teachers took various approaches to implementing the action plan, all adapting it to suit their capabilities and students needs. Greg decided that as most of his class had written texts that appeared to be reports, he would build on this by introducing this text type instead of the recount as planned in the First Cycle. When his students were able to
write a report to what he thought was a satisfactory standard, Greg taught the recount. His class found this framework much easier to follow as it was a more familiar type of text.

The other teachers started with recount as planned. The steps to be implemented were: first to practise the recount orally and show examples of written forms during library visits (immersion), then problem solve the framework from a written example of a recount. After that, the teacher was to model writing showing the children how to follow the framework (demonstration). Next the children were to write a recount, share it with their group and evaluate their work by comparing it with the framework and teacher’s model.

However, the sequence of the plan was modified by all the teachers. Instead of firstly showing the children examples of the text type during oral and reading sessions, the teachers went straight into showing the children the recount framework. They believed it was necessary to introduce the framework first so that the children could practise following it.

The second step of the plan, using the problem solving technique to assist the children to discover the framework
from a written example, was followed by only one teacher. Greg displayed examples of the recount and by questioning, guided the children's analysis of the piece to discover the framework categories.

Greg: Some of them found it quite easy. Some were enlightened I think--like we were, at the Latham and Sloan Workshop. The children enjoyed it.

The others, uncertain what was meant by "problem solve the framework", used a more direct approach. Rhonda's journal account illustrates the method adopted by the majority, although perhaps she was more diffident than some:

I've read through our plan of action twice and I'm still not sure how to begin. I want the children to know why I'm teaching/trialling this. Told them about the in-service course. Defined recount and talked about the framework. Gave an oral recount myself and we looked at my setting to see if it told "who", "when", "where" and "why".

Doing the recount orally proved very successful for all teachers.

Rhonda: They really got involved with the oral recount. They were very excited and motivated. Just like telling news back in Year One!

Greg: They really enjoyed it.

Rhonda: It may be just my perception but the students were really happy they could hang on to a "who", "when", "where" and "why" as an option in the opening paragraph.
Alison used another approach. She started by introducing the idea of paragraphing. She drew several boxes on the blackboard and explained that "one paragraph, that is one idea, was to go in each box". Her journal entry states:

We discussed discourse markers, beginnings of sentences, to give the idea of which should come first. Using the chart of the recount as a guide, the Year 2/3 children retold events of "Yesterday After School". Wrote their sentences in paragraph boxes. Then during the library session we revised the idea of discourse markers. The students cut their writing into paragraph boxes then placed them out of sequence. Partners read through the story and using the discourse markers as a guide, sequenced and glued the story back together. The children became aware of the need to use sentence beginnings for clues as to which idea would follow. (9.05.91)

Rhonda used a similar technique by giving the children a recount that had been cut into paragraphs and replaced in a jumbled order. The task was to sequence the paragraphs correctly into the recount structure using language features such as discourse markers of time as a guide.

Sue, like the others, adapted the First Cycle Action Plan. She was so excited about "having guidelines at last" that she "leapt into recount in the senior room, Years 4-7 children". Her journal entry states:

Explained that the teachers had a work shop on types of writing and were pleased that we'd come away with some very specific guidelines called frameworks. Presented recount using page 8 from Latham and Sloan.
Blackboarded the definition and the framework. Children matched the framework to the areas of "A Trip to the Zoo". In the notes children highlighted definition, framework, title, line between paragraphs and ending. Keeping in mind the definition, i.e., time order, the children were asked to write a recount of a recent event. They were given these editing guidelines:

a) Is it a recount (title, setting, events 1-4, ending)?
b) Does it make sense?
c) Will any changes improve your writing?
d) Spelling and punctuation? (29.04.91).

Cris also made modifications to the plan. He stated Sue took the writing lessons in the senior room so he used his spelling time to try out the plan with the Years 4-7, who had already encountered the recount framework in Sue’s and Alison’s lessons.

Cris: I only did one recount. It was incorporated into their spelling contract. What the students had to do was to choose a few words from their quota and, as long as they did a recount they could write about anything they liked.

To start we wrote an introduction. Then I said, "here’s the introduction use it as a check list. Make sure you have all the information".

The next step in the action plan was for the teachers to point out to their students what the recount looked like in real life, by showing them examples in the newspaper and library books. But here several teachers were confronted by a problem. Recounts in society do not rigidly follow the framework.
Rhonda: We gave out newspapers and went through them and many of the articles didn't actually follow the recount structure. And I said "Oh!" because I thought that it was going to be a simple exercise. But the opening paragraphs didn't say "who", "when", "where" and "why".

This problem was caused by the teachers unfamiliarity with this text type and relying on using the framework to recognise it in life. It was found that the recount did not always appear in society like the simple, straightforward examples set out in the Latham and Sloan booklet (1989). Texts in life are often a combination of several text types. For example, a report may introduce the subject "Herbs" and commence "Herbs are ..." and a procedure might follow to tell how to grow and use them. The teachers need to become more familiar with the texts so they can recognise how they are used in life to meet the requirements of audience and purpose.

Step Six of the action plan was for the teacher to model how to write a recount following the framework. Maxine describes the modelling session that followed her classes oral practice of recount:

Maxine: I introduced the recount framework to the students. We had a few examples, and I read them a few examples of things like letters and diaries--those sorts of things. I wrote one on the blackboard--modelled how to do it. It was quite hilarious!
That’s all I had time for in that lesson. So the next lesson I got the students to have a go at writing a recount themselves. Before they started, I went through the framework again with them. We went through my story and then the students had a go at writing their own. Some of them are really quite interesting to read.

Alison adapted the strategy of modelled writing. She only taught one day a week, making it necessary to use her teaching time as economically as possible. So she modified the way she modelled writing:

Alison: I’m only in for a short time as I’m only in Thursdays, so usually with the 2s and 3s I write when they write. I fill up my boxes but I put more sentences in so they see you don’t just have to have only one sentence in each paragraph. You can have more than one. I put two or three in mine so they can see that you can follow on. While I’m writing on the blackboard they do their bit. Then I read mine through and they do theirs, but I find I run out of time.

The process of writing a recount in front of the class, providing a model for the children to follow, was a new experience for most teachers. Some felt quite strange as they wrote, verbalising their thoughts to demonstrate to the children how they selected ideas and composed their writing on large piece of paper. During the process, two teachers were confronted with a problem—whether to let the children join in or not. Rhonda decided that it was against "the rules" and that she would write and the children would listen and observe as she composed, re-read
and edited. As the children were not involved, several of them soon lost interest and became inattentive and off task.

\textit{Rhonda:} That's what I was doing. Verbalising along to myself and I could see these students mucking about on the mat and I had to turn around and tell these students off, then go back to writing.

\textit{Greg:} I also had that problem in my group. I have the range from Year 7 to Year 5 and I've got the Year 7's getting bored out of their brains because they can see what is happening quite easily and then I have the Year 5's who are quite interested in it, so I have to hit the middle somehow. I think probably I missed it.

I had a few students who were really bored so I thought, "Right! I'll let them help me" and they were quite happy to do that.

Greg developed a solution to this problem by totally involving the students. He divided his class into teams to write a report or recount.

\textit{Greg:} I chose the competent ones in the group to act as facilitators and they had the brown paper and there was a team out in front. Once they knew off by heart the different things that they had to set up for a report or a recount, it was up to the team leader to keep them on track. They found that was quite interesting because they actually rotated the team leader as well. Once the better child started, they said "Well, this isn't too hard". Then they passed the pen on and the next child stood up and took over. At the end of the day we got together and had a look around at the different groups. We read out their charts and sort of picked each other to pieces--what I call a Victor Vulture--a friendly Victor Vulture.

It is evident that this teacher was able to innovate on a
plan of action to meet the needs of the students and make his lesson successful.

The last steps of the action plan were for the children to write, to share their writing and evaluate it. The teachers found the children were very supportive of each others' efforts:

*Rhonda:* The students were generally very helpful. They didn’t just sit back and criticise the work. They tried to make it better or show the other students where they went wrong.

The strength of students helping students was supported by the analysis of the pupil questionnaire.

*Greg:* I gave them a questionnaire on that particular lesson. I asked them to analyse that lesson where they did most of the modelling and it’s interesting. Eight people said they needed help. And where it says, "Who gave you the help", they said, "Other members of the group".

The teachers found the sharing time valuable for observing difficulties the children were experiencing.

*Cris:* We read them out in the sharing. We read the introduction to make sure we had the elements there, and the Year 4s were lacking. There would be something missing somewhere. Two of the students actually went right through, writing the whole story without paragraphs. The whole lot from start to finish! They didn’t even know there must be an introduction!
Cris noticed that the Year 4s were having trouble using the framework to guide their writing and as a check list for editing:

*Cris*: I think the Year 5/6/7s seem to take off pretty well, but the Year 4s ... I pointed out several times, "Here is a check list. When you have finished the introduction I want you to read it and I want you to check you have each of these elements in it (with the "why" as the option)". Most of them had two points, the "who" and "where" or "who" or "when", but they didn't actually have the three. So whether that was a bit slack on their part, I don't know.

Maxine observed a similar thing in her class:

*Maxine*: When I went through and was reading their work that I collected, the big thing I noticed ... one was the paragraphs. In their initial paragraph they'd only get two factors. They'd get the "who" and the "when" but the "where" was never mentioned, or they'd state "who" and "where" but they were never able to get all three, i.e., "who", and "when" and "where". Even when they were telling news. You know, at the end when you ask them, "Did you find out the 'who' and the 'when' and the 'where'?" Most times they had two parts of the setting, but never three. So its obviously something that needs reinforcing with the students.

Most of the teachers found this was an initial problem. The checklist and framework were new to the children who had previously been used to writing with little structure or guidance. They had not previously had to analyse their writing against a criterion. Greater expectations were being placed on the students and some of them, as Rhonda
found, "were reluctant to analyse their own or each others work".

One of the encouraging things the teachers observed was the majority of the children were now using paragraphs set out in logical order. Even the Years 1-3, who had previously not been expected to use paragraphs (Educ Dept of WA, 1978), showed interest in this concept:

Maxine: I asked them whether they had learnt anything new and they all said "Yes" and I said "What sort of things?" The one they talked about was paragraphs—realising that they could put a space between and by putting a space between each paragraph it was a lot easier to read. They thought that was pretty good. That seemed to be the big thing that they commented about.

A Year 1 student, because he was exposed to the lesson given to the Year 2/3s, had a go at writing a paragraph:

Maxine: I mean some of them are getting the idea. One of my Year Ones writes his sentence. Even if it's not completed he'll put his ruler in and continue on and that's his paragraph. It's quite funny. He's obviously getting the idea that he needs a space but doesn't realise he has to finish the sentence first, or the idea, before he starts onto the next one. They're aware of what a paragraph is but still not how to use one. It's an area that needs more practise with all of them.

The concepts of paragraphing that Maxine had taught to her Year 2/3s were reinforced by Sue in the Formal English lessons and Alison in the library. These two teachers also
did similar lessons with the Years 4-7.

All teachers of the rural school using the recount framework to teach paragraphing meant there was continuity in what was presented to the students. The principal, Cris, could see the value of each teacher supporting the other by teaching in this way:

**Cris:** I see that is the main advantage of the recount framework is learning to paragraph. All the students are starting to paragraph.

However, every teacher in the school working on recount with the same group of children had some problems:

**Sue:** The senior students say, "Not recount again!"

This problem was mainly caused by the delay of our Second Cycle for two weeks due to school commitments. The teachers resolved the difficulty by introducing a new text type to the children.

Alison chose to teach the report as she felt it was the most appropriate form to teach in the library. Prior to our First Cycle Action Plan, the children had used the library period to research and write information presenting it attractively as a project:
Alison: They used to do projects once a term and they love doing them. It’s something they like to do and we just thought we would carry on with reports just to see how they would go. I thought it would be good because they are reading for information and learning to put the facts together—I wasn’t too happy with them lifting things from books and I thought this would be a way to teach them to read for information which I think is really important.

The report framework was taught by Alison to juniors and seniors in their library periods. For both, she followed the action plan of first introducing the text type by showing a written example, then guiding the children to discover the structure as she wrote the framework on the blackboard. Next the children read a passage about an animal and brain-stormed all the facts they could remember after reading. Her journal states:

We discussed the format of the report and the vocabulary used. Then we placed all the brain-stormed facts into the four categories. Using the paragraph boxes, we placed classification facts into a sentence, and repeated the steps with description, place/time and dynamics. If a couple of sentences were needed they were used. All the children contributed—it was a group session, with group ideas and group editing. We discussed use of sentence beginnings and discourse markers.

Children enjoyed the lesson. It was easy for them to understand. It will be interesting to see the results from the follow up lesson next week. (23.05.91)

Maxine followed up Alison’s lesson by modelling a report to her children:
Maxine: When I did my report it was about snakes. It was weird whatever I wrote! I can't believe it reading back now ... we had lots of laughs. Then they had a go.

Beth: Did you use the framework for the report?

Maxine: Yes. The 3s were fine because they had been doing projects with Alison in their library sessions and they were much more clued up about the four sections, brainstorming facts into boxes and writing about them. But the Year 1s--straight over their head. Pretty non existent for them--they really didn't understand at all what I was doing. But one of my boys has had a go at writing two of them. He's got the idea. He realises he has to write about an animal, which is obviously the easiest one to do. He has told some things. It's not really set out so well but he's attempted it and he's told me what he has written. He's written a report. So I mean he's the only one out of all the 1/2/3s (because they're doing it with their project) that's actually written a report. I mean he's told me twice, "I've written two reports". He's obviously having a go. He's the same one who's using the paragraphs and not finishing his sentences.

The same Year 1 child again attempted a report in free writing:

Maxine: He got up and read it. And it was just absolutely amazing to me! I thought, "that was wonderful", because I had given them free writing--I said, "You can write what you want,"--and he came up with this report, which is so wonderful!

Sue reinforced what Maxine taught in her report lessons to Year 2/3. An innovation she used was a fact sheet to help them brain-storm:
The children looked at a picture of an animal, then brain-stormed as many facts as they could on a strip of paper ... drawing on prior knowledge ... stuck strips onto framework areas. Child wrote on blackboard to put the facts into sensible sentences ... The result for Year 2/3 was very good, I thought. (4.06.91)

Another report lesson was taken by Sue in the senior room. Here the children had trouble deciding "which categories some facts were to fit into". However, the reports were written using paragraphs, much to Sue's delight.

After two library sessions on report writing, Alison assessed the children's progress. Her journal states:

**Juniors:** Tended to follow chart format really well. Reports well done. One Year 2 child did not find many facts and could not fill all four boxes, so she realised next time she would need to read for more information. The rest were a very good attempt. They could:

- a) read for facts;
- b) record facts on a sheet;
- c) transfer these facts to four boxes and mostly place the information in the correct boxes;
- d) place facts into sentences and begin paragraphing; and
- e) at the end as a summary, make a statement about why they chose the animal.

**Seniors:** The children who followed the format had a finished product with:

- a) facts;
- b) information in own words; and
- c) paragraphing.

A couple of weaker children, not working at year level, had trouble but, when helped by me produced a result. One Year 5 battled to write in his own words as previously he had copied a lot from books. The
Year 6 standards varied—three out of five followed the framework. One tried to do an 'old style of project'. One had trouble recording facts. He will need help next time. Of the Year 7s, one followed the framework well, but the other was disappointing. One was absent. Children seemed to enjoy report writing.

In comparison to the baseline writing, the seniors were showing good progress. However it was evident that the children would need further practice at finding enough facts to write a report well.

The careful preparation for writing given by the teachers to the students resulted in the children being able to follow the framework to write a recount or report with few problems.

One area of general weakness was the difficulty children had in composing a suitable ending or summarising comment. This was substantiated by the teacher’s analysis of the children’s work (using the checklists), student’s analysis of student’s work (during the sharing time) and the student’s self analysis (using the questionnaire).

The pupil questionnaire was valued by the teachers, in spite of the fact that only two had so far given it to their students. Greg and Maxine liked it because it confirmed their predictions about how well the pupils had understood the lesson. However, Maxine found it was
necessary to modify the use of it for her Year 1-3s, by asking the questions to each child during conferencing. The others preferred to wait until they felt more confident teaching the text types before asking their students to evaluate the lesson. Rhonda had not yet used it but felt "it would be a real spin-off for the students to believe we actually valued their opinions".

On the other hand Rhonda found her students were reluctant to analyse their own work or each other's. She thought that giving the students a similar checklist to the one she used to analyse their work, may be a solution. Rhonda intended to try this out during the second cycle of action.

Greg's students had a very positive approach to analysing and evaluating their work. They used a buddy system. The writer, with a pen in hand would read aloud his/her work to another child. The listener had a list of five or six things to be observed and offered suggestions on completion of the reading. In this way the writer received assistance from a sympathetic listener to edit and improve his/her writing.

From the above information it is apparent that teachers will modify a plan of action to best suit their
capabilities, the time constraints and the needs of their children.
CHAPTER 5

SECOND CYCLE

STEP 1: Reconnaissance: Sharing Problems and Concerns
Resulting from the First Plan of Action.

h) What specific problems did the teachers encounter and how did they overcome them?

The following are the collated problems and concerns encountered by the Mixed School and Rural School Teams during the implementation of the plan of action:

1. Problem of analysing the children's baseline writing collected prior to the first meeting.

The majority of teachers experienced this due to their lack of knowledge and insufficient experience of teaching and analysing these types of texts. Generally it was considered that this problem would cure itself as teachers became more conversant with these types of writing.

2. Students had trouble writing concluding statements.

The teachers believed that the use of the frameworks to
guide the children’s writing and editing would rectify this
general weakness in the children’s oral and written texts.

3. Inattention of children during modelling sessions.

This was a problem specific to two teachers who were able
to modify their teaching strategies to solve the problem.

4. Difficulty experienced by teachers in finding
examples of the text types (to provide models for the
children) as society contains many examples of texts
that do not clearly follow the frameworks.

Becoming familiar with the text types and recognising them
in society was a deep concern and resulted in a lot of
discussion:

Rhonda: I want to go and teach the framework of a
report. We actually had a guest speaker who
demonstrated Expired Air Resuscitation to the students
and I got them to write a recount. As they were doing
it I thought, "I wonder if this should be a report
rather then a recount?" They could retell the
experience, but the actual experience probably would
lean itself more to a report format--but because I
hadn’t taught the report framework I got them to write
recounts.

Greg: I can see that this is going to be a problem.

Beth: I believe the "Language Sphere Composing
Questions" (Appendix ) would help you. "What is it
for?" If it’s going to be about something scientific;
if it’s going to be to do with, say social studies; if
it’s going to inform a person; then it will probably
be a report. But if you’re telling of a past experience by sharing it with someone else who wasn’t there and you want to inform them of what was done then you’d probably use a recount. That’s why I think you may need to consider these language sphere questions (Appendix 6). To make children aware of why this text type was chosen, why not ask them the questions: "Why do you think this was written? Who was the audience that the author had in mind?" Because to me when anyone goes to write anything, like the author of anything you pick up, you must consider audience and purpose because they govern what text type is chosen and what language is used. Perhaps we need to bring it into our reading lessons. When you have finished reading the story you could ask: "When the writer wrote that, who do you think he was writing it for?"

You could apply it to the "Amy Johnson" recount (Latham and Sloan, 1989, p.51). Why was that written? To inform—to tell about Amy Johnson’s life.

Rhonda: So a recount is more for leisure and pleasure reading.

Beth: It’s sharing past experiences, isn’t it?

Greg: Not necessarily. It could be to pass information on as in Amy Johnson.

Rhonda: Well that was like this EAR (Expired Air Resuscitation) demonstration that we had in health. With a recount, they didn’t actually go through the process of telling you how EAR was conducted they went through the process of telling what they saw and what they experienced.

Greg: This really concerns me.

Rhonda: If I’d made them write the steps of the EAR then that would be a report or an explanation perhaps?

Beth: An explanation perhaps, but probably a procedure.

Greg: Then that’s where it’s going to come back to that list, ‘Some Text Forms in Which Text Types Can Be Realised’ (Latham and Sloan, 1989, p.7). Here where they say different text types. Different forms can fall into different text types.
Rhonda: You've got an Essay here in the Comparison Contrast, Exposition, Explanation and Report columns. I guess there you would have to look at your audience and your purpose because an essay can be a report or one of four or five different text types.

Beth: It's really interesting to test it out in life, whether we are teaching them a framework that society itself generally doesn't know.

Rhonda: I had hassles with that. I went down to the school library and I was going to grab Diary of Ann Frank and Adrian Mole aged 13 3/4 because it shows that diaries, journals and logs are recount but Ann Frank is a narrative.

Beth: Not written in diary form?

Rhonda: It's a narrative. So I've found it difficult to come up with examples of recounts other than the Sloan and Latham Handbook.

Greg: That's what I was saying. When we gave the students projects to do in Social Studies, some of them had gone along the recount form and some along the report form (text type) and the confusion arouse of which one should we be using so I said "I think you are both right; there is no right or wrong here. As long as you decide who the audience is and why you are doing it". So you say "Right, it's going to be a recount" and follow that format. If you chose a person to do in Social Studies then it would be basically a recount of that person's life.

It is clear from the above transcript that the teachers were trying to understand the relationship between the text types and forms and recognising text types used in life. I was also having trouble with the concept and felt there was a need for me to do further research to assist the teachers.
5. Teachers were uncertain of how rigidly the framework should control the writing of each text type.

The teaching of the frameworks prompted the following question: Should the children be allowed to vary the structure or not?

Sue: I think in recount they want to stretch the framework and rules a bit.

Beth: In what way are they stretching the framework?

Sue: One child wanted to put the paragraph that said "The best thing you’ve done for me, Mum, was eight hours labour". She wanted to put it last because she thought it was important, the most important to her in her three events that her mother had done. And I said, "but it happened first". And she stood up and argued, "but I need it to go last because it is the most important and it belongs here".

The discourse markers of time in the recount also caused some conflict:

Sue: I wrote about feeding my cat so they could see the order of the events. The students, this is the Year 2/3s, wanted to argue with me about my last and finally.

Alison: I told them the last discourse marker usually said finally--that sort of end.

Sue: That’s the final event--not necessarily the conclusion. These students who were six and seven were standing up and arguing black and blue about why it wouldn’t go there.
Maxine: Well I don’t know. I think it really depends how the students feel. I mean it’s their writing. If it’s acceptable and makes sense then I don’t see there’s really a problem with it.

It is apparent from this discussion that there is a problem with common language. The words ‘final’ and ‘end’ are being interpreted differently by the parties involved.

Another concern about the framework was in report writing. When they were brain-storming facts, the children and teachers were having trouble categorising them under the framework headings:

Sue: I found that they are having trouble deciding which category to put a fact in. It’s the "dynamics" particularly.

Alison: I agree but I don’t want to take away the feeling that it is their story by directing where they should place each fact. I said, "You choose the box you want to put it in and it’s all right with me. If you want to put it in that box instead of this one, that suits me fine because it’s your story." I don’t want them to feel that I am taking their story and making it my story or report.

Beth: What do the rest of you think?

Maxine: It’s a really tricky one, isn’t it? There must be an exception I suppose to everything. If they can justify it and as long as you can agree with their justification then I think its okay.

Cris: And as long as the paragraphing is being used correctly.

Beth: I think there has to be some freedom with writing otherwise you are going to kill the originality.
It was agreed that the classification of facts under the framework categories would depend on how the fact was intended to be used. For example "Australian" could be placed under "classification" if you intended to write "Australian mammal", but it could also be classified as "location" if you were going to tell where this mammal lived. Therefore, it was decided that if the child could justify the selection of category then the teachers would allow flexibility.

6. Children in the senior room had formed habits in their writing and did not want to change.

The teachers found that writing to a framework was new and interesting to the junior children who were coping well with the change in the writing programme. However, several of the seniors were reluctant to change from their former ways of presenting a project:

Alison: It's just a couple of them who are reluctant to change. They think, "No, that's not how we do it. I can't do it like that."

Cris: Is that the kid or is it coming from home?

Alison: It’s the parent and the child. You see a child the other day was in tears because she had gone home and copied big slabs from a book and that’s not what I’d asked for. I said, "I will help you. We will try again," and I took her back to her seat.

Maxine: Curtains!
Alison: Yes. I find that very quickly. If they don't think they can do it the curtains come down and you're up against a brick wall. This report one specially. The recount was no problem.

Maxine: Because that's what they are doing all the time. Something like a report is a more specialised type of writing.

Sue: It's still a very good framework though.

Maxine: Oh, yes, I agree. I'm not saying its not. I'm saying because it's one they wouldn't use so frequently, they think it's all new.

Alison: It's the project work. They're having to read facts and then organise it. It's the organisation, and the reading for information--the thinking it through. I've made them put a paragraph at the end to tell me why they have chosen that animal. And they want to say, "Why should we do that?"

I mean it's getting there but it was just a real hard slog at the beginning. Even though we worked through examples on the board and we did the brainstorming part and we did the facts, the putting into boxes, the writing of the story and the editing. We went through all that for two weeks for an hour in some of the classes. They had a lot of background but its just that they don't see the end of the tunnel yet.

Beth: I think you hit the nail on the head when you said that recount was easy to do. Kids do them all the time. With the report, you are trying to introduce something that is totally different. And therefore, some of them are having trouble.

The teachers believed that when the children saw the high standard they had achieved in their writing by following the frameworks they would see the change was worthwhile. Therefore reluctance to change would no longer be a problem.
7. Years 4 - 7 are not editing their work for spelling, punctuation and grammar.

The unwillingness for the senior children to edit their work concerned several teachers. Cris’s statement "the biggest problem I found was the basic spelling and sentence structure", stimulated discussion about how the teachers currently taught editing. Alison wrote a piece on the blackboard then worked with the children to correct the errors. Cris taught editing in a Formal English lesson by using photocopies of writing. Sue had a checklist for editing that she encouraged the children to use after writing. She also handled editing problems during her conferences with the children. Maxine ran a programme that developed independent editing skills:

Maxine: Once my students have written their work, before they come to me, they must read it, go through it and circle any words that they are not sure of in their red pencil. They must check for capital letters and full stops, or forms of punctuation. Once they have done that, then they bring it to me and we go through it.

I am really quite happy with what my students are doing. I mean quite a few are going through and circling words that are wrong. Punctuation needs a constant reminder. I’ll say to them, after a quick look at it, "Look there are some full stops missing. Would you put them in please." Then I send them away without putting pen to paper to edit their work, and they do their corrections. Whether they put them in the right spot or not is what we check when they come back to me.
I'll also quickly glance and say, "Look, there are some spelling errors in this part. You go away and circle which one you think it is." I'm really quite happy with the way they do it.

Greg also developed independent editing skills in his students by holding Victor Vulture sessions and Buddy Conferences which have previously been described.

Few of the teachers held step by step lessons on editing.

This prompted me to suggest a teaching strategy they could use to develop independent spellers responsible for their own editing. The following discussion includes the opinion of a parent who was present at this meeting:

Beth: Would it help if you actually taught them how to edit? I would like to share a strategy with you. Put a sample of a child's writing on the overhead projector. So the kid won't feel threatened add some errors to the sample. Tell the class you have added some errors. Then show them how to break prediction by placing a ruler under each line and reading a line at a time. You go through the actual process with them (they could each have a photocopied sheet) reading a line at a time and circling any words that appear to have been misspelt. By doing this you are training the children to be independent of you. They won't have someone to edit their work for them in life!

Next you show them how to have a go to fix the word, trying alternative spellings. After they have had three tries, they circle the one they think is correct. To confirm their judgement they can either ask you, a partner or look it up in the dictionary. They write the correction above the error. It will help if the double space their draft copy.

Do you think that sort of technique would help?
Parent: The technique is a good idea but it all gets back to time again, doesn’t it? That is what I would see as the biggest factor.

Beth: Do you think spending time on that now, by actually showing them the process, you may save time in the long run?

Sue: It’d set a pattern.

Maxine: Well it would really. If you don’t show them "how" then they are not going to know. And if you set aside that time, then that time’s well spent.

Beth: Otherwise we are not really treating the problem, are we.

All of the teachers could see the value of actually instructing children on how to edit. However, several of the teachers felt reluctant to do this because it required further change in practice and required extra teaching time.

8. Predicted future problem of having to explain to children which text type is appropriate to choose.

This problem, expressed by the Mixed School Team, stemmed from the teachers own lack of knowledge of these types of writing. They were not yet conversant with these text types and their associated forms of writing and, therefore, were concerned about their ability to help the children use them meaningfully in life:
Greg: My concern now is what we were talking about previously that perhaps crunch time is going to come when we have to try to explain to the students that this chart here (Latham and Sloan, p.23-24), that it is not just going to be cut and dried. That once we know the framework we have to decide ...

Rhonda: Which text form.

Greg: Which text form. And I guess, if you are going to decide which text form we have to decide, what Beth was talking about before--the audience you are writing for.

Greg: I can see down the track that will be our ultimate concern.

Rhonda: Cause they'll say to us "You told us an essay is a report, how can that also be a exposition?"

Greg: Yes, I think that's going to be our concern. I can see all this falling into place reasonably, with a few concerns along the way perhaps but in the end we are going to have to justify what I've just said.

Rhonda: Kids may take that better than we think though. After we've demonstrated.

Greg: Could do--if we give them some examples.

Rhonda: That's right. If we demonstrated that.

Again the teachers were grappling with the problem of their lack of knowledge about these texts. This concern led to the belief that other teachers also had this lack of knowledge. Of specific concern was: "What happens to their students when they go to high school?"
9. Transition to secondary school could be a problem.

This concern was specific to the Mixed School Team. They were aware that when their children progressed to secondary school, they would be mixing with many others who have perhaps not been taught to write the text types. Also the secondary teachers may not recognise or have knowledge of the frameworks and, therefore, may not support the teaching that has occurred in primary school.

*Greg:* Another thing, this transitional thing to High School is a concern. I’ve got year seven’s going on. What’s going to happen to them? Not saying it will happen but when they do go on to high school and we’ve taught them these frameworks and if they’re not recognised at high school. We might need some cross fertilisation there of some ideas perhaps.

*Rhonda:* Secondary staff have to be aware of what the Year 7s have done. If they know the text types the secondary teachers will back up what we’ve taught about text types and forms of writing.

The desire to have continuity between primary and secondary school led to planning how to achieve it. Rhonda was in a fortunate position having a regular transition programme operating between the secondary school and her primary school, giving her the opportunity to set up some form of programme to address the problem. Greg was in a less fortunate position only having contact with the secondary school "a couple of days at the end of the year". He was really concerned about this and included it in the plan of
further action by proposing to make contact with the Senior Master of the secondary school that the majority of his students would be attending.

The following problems were specific to the Rural School Team:

10. The progression through the text types was too slow when locked into an action plan of doing one text at a time.

Sue's journal entry reflects the feelings of the other staff members:

I think the seniors, especially Years 5-7, need to be exposed to types more quickly. Between the three of us they have had reports and recounts up to the eyeballs! Alison has something to say about reports. I think some of our children are a little afraid of failing—something new. The shutters come down even though the frameworks can only make things clearer (n.d.).

This problem was addressed in the Second Cycle action plan by proposing to teach the text types according to need.
11. Teachers do not have sufficient time to cover the different aspects of the action plan because of the timetabling of lessons and teaching staff.

Maxine, who shares her teaching time with Sue, Alison and the scripture teacher, found that her timetable did not give her enough time to organise the writing programme as she would like:

*Maxine:* What I’d like to do is to show them, get them to evaluate and write in the same lesson but I don’t have enough time to fit it all in. I find if I model it and then the next day they write it and then evaluate it, I find it’s too long a gap. I would like to do it in one day but I don’t have enough time. It’s something I’m going to have to change around or instead of having it before, have it after lunch so we’ve got a long enough period to do it all—because I feel if I do it all in one day it’s all fresh in their mind while we’re still talking about it.

Alison had to spread her lessons on report writing over three weeks as she only worked one day a week:

*Alison:* The report was done slowly—a brainstorming one week then getting them to go home and finish it off, then do the four boxes the next week, then the paragraphs the next week—it’s a long time for the children to do a project!

Sue had half an hour of writing with the Year 2s:

*Sue:* I find that with the Year 2 group, which is a half hour lesson, I don’t get time to write anything.
It is evident from the above that schools should give careful consideration when timetabling, that sufficient time be allotted to language so that a block can be taught instead of disjointed segments. This would allow for flow on lessons rather than the current "insufficient time to do anything in depth".

12. Parents who are used to helping their children with their writing and projects at home, are finding their efforts are no longer supporting what is being taught in the school.

The changes in the school's approach to teaching writing was causing conflict at home:

Alison: I found the parents had a preconceived idea of what the children should be doing and they are sort of trying to lead the children the way they think they should be going and arguing black and blue. I've had a lot of parents saying to me, "Oh, I said that's not the way to do it". They are trying to lead the children.

You see a child's mum went down and photocopied all this stuff for her and she was really upset. So I said, "Look, I don't want all this. We're looking for facts."

"Oh, but Mum spent lots of money doing this."

This is the sort of thing we mean. Parents take over. So I said, "That's the icing on the cake. If you have got all the facts, that's fabulous. All the rest is the icing on the cake."
So I have to remind them over and over again that I want just the facts. But the first time is always the hardest!

The school decided to address this problem by educating the parents:

Maxine: We’re going to overcome this problem. On Monday night we are going to have a Parents’ Night to go through this programme—mainly with reports in mind (with Alison in the library doing reports on projects). We’re going to have a Parent’s Night to show parents that this is what we are teaching the students at school, this is how you can help them. So we are sort of overcoming the problem this way.

Cris: Basically this is what we are going to say, "This is what we have been doing in recounts and now you have a go at doing it. Now we are going to do a report. This is what we have been doing. this is how we want it structured."

Maybe we will work in groups and they come up with a report.

Beth: So it will be a practical workshop?

Cris: I’ll read to them the section out of the grey book (The Monitoring Standards in Education Program) of what the students are lacking, then point out to them that when your Year 7s leave here they will be in front of others entering secondary school because they will be able to select and maintain an appropriate organising framework for their writing.

The teachers of the rural school had confronted a problem and worked their own solution prior to the Second Cycle Action Meeting. They are becoming more familiar with the text types and their confidence is such that they are prepared to hold a workshop for parents.
Revision of thematic concern. The reflection on the progress made and the problems encountered in the first cycle resulted in additions to the thematic concern and hypothesis, and changes to the Action Plan.

Revised thematic concern. The main area of concern was how to implement effectively the knowledge gained at the Latham and Sloan Workshop on "Strategies for Teaching Children How to Write Narrative and Informational Texts".

The following are the issues that were addressed:

1. We need to improve our knowledge of the frameworks for the different types of informational texts required by the English Language K-7 Syllabus.

2. We also need to improve our knowledge of the language and conventions associated with the different types of texts, i.e. grammar, punctuation and paragraphing and so on.

3. We need to link the teaching of informational texts to audience and purpose so that the students can select the appropriate text type to use in life.
4. We need to inform the secondary teachers of the work our students have done in relation to the writing of informational texts, thus facilitating their transition to senior high school (Mixed School Team).

5. We need to inform our students' parents of these text types and their associated frameworks so that the home can continue to support the school. (Rural School)

Revised hypotheses to guide the teachers' research.

1. If our knowledge of the frameworks of informational writing and the conventions associated with the different text types improves then the children's writing will also improve in these areas.

2. If we relate the teaching of informational texts to audience and purpose, the students will be able to choose the appropriate text type to use in society.

Step 2: Our Modified Action Plan

i) How did the teachers modify their plan of action as the programme progressed?

The second cycle of the action plan was basically the same as the first but with additions to meet the needs of the
During the implementation of the first cycle action plan the teachers had grown more confident about teaching informational writing. They therefore preferred to be able to select for themselves the text type to teach rather than having the group nominate one. In this way, the teachers would be able to respond more specifically to the students' requirements.

Each of the action research teams had specific needs. The Mixed School Team wanted to inform the secondary school about the frameworks taught to the primary school children to guide the writing and editing of informational texts. The Rural School planned to hold a workshop to inform the parents about these texts and how they were being taught in the school. They also expressed the need to teach editing skills to the children.

The following is the combined action plan of the two teams for the second cycle:

1. The text types will be chosen according to need.
2. The framework will be introduced by problem solving from an example. The teacher will focus the children's ideas by guiding with questions.
3. The text type chosen will be linked to the audience and purpose.
4. Examples of the chosen text type will be found in the resource centre and from life so as to link what the children do in class to the real world. The purpose and audience will be recognised by asking the questions 'Who's it for?' and 'Why was it written?'. This will followed by a discussion on 'Is this text type the most suitable for the purpose? Why?'.

5. Children will practice the text type orally following the framework before writing.

6. The teacher will model the written text type so as to link the oral to the written and demonstrate the process of following the framework.

7. After writing their own piece the children will share it with their peers. It will be received first for its audience value (enjoyment, information etc.), whether it fulfilled the purpose and finally if it followed the framework.

8. The teacher will demonstrate how to edit the draft work and have a go at spelling the errors correctly.

9. The children will be encouraged to edit their work, using the process demonstrated by the teacher.

10. To assist our Year Seven's transition to secondary school some form of contact will be made with these teachers and information passed on to them of the frameworks we have taught the children for informational text writing (Mixed School Group).

11. Recognising that the home is an extension of the learning at school, the teachers will hold a workshop to instruct the parents on the text types and the frameworks of informational texts so that the school programme will be supported at home (Rural School Team).

**Planning for monitoring.** The following is the modified monitoring plan for data collection:

1. The children's writing will be evaluated on whether they are able to structure correctly the text type taught to them. Evaluation checklists will be made specific to each text type to assist analysis (Appendices 3a-f).
2. Observations about the children's writing will be entered freely into the personal-professional journals rather than restricted by the sampling cards (see p.47). Emotional responses to the pupils' learning experiences will be included.

3. A questionnaire will be made specific to each text type. This will save time as the children will only have to tick boxes instead of writing responses (Appendices 2a-f).

4. The Rural School Team will monitor their Parent Workshop by making a questionnaire similar to the pupil questionnaire.

5. After initial contact has been made with the secondary school, the degree of success would be gauged by requests from the secondary school for further information.

The second cycle meeting concluded with the teachers arranging to meet again in six weeks' time.
Reflections of the Researcher after the Second Cycle Meeting

j) What support did the teachers need to implement the action plan?

k) In working as members of this group, to what extent did the language and the discourse used by the members change when used in the context of teaching writing?

l) In working as members of this group, to what extent did the participants' roles in the group, school and community change?

On conclusion of the first cycle of the research, it is apparent that although the teachers had attended a one day inservice, they were having problems implementing the knowledge they had received. This was affecting their ability to analyse the children's writing and find suitable examples of the text types in society. It was also giving rise to problems such as classifying facts under framework categories and making decisions about how rigidly the schematic structure should be followed. To improve the teachers' knowledge of the different text types, I believed it was important for them to be able to recognise the text types in life, namely, the newspaper. The result was a
handout (Appendix 1) that set out the steps to follow to be able to classify the different text types. This was done by reading the text to establish why it had been written, the purpose for writing helping the reader to guess the text type used. Next this guess was confirmed by examining the language used, e.g., the exposition would use an assertive type of language with connectives associated with reasoning. The establishing of the text type facilitated finding which parts of the text matched the categories of the framework, e.g., in the case of the exposition which paragraph gave the overview of the topic and which the argument and so on.

Language and discourse. It was noted during the discussion that the teachers were becoming more familiar with the use of the words "text types", "forms", "framework" and "structure". Previously they had no common language to talk about written text. They used an individual language with words such as "mechanics" or "outline" with the result that the user had to explain the meaning to the group.

Another area that was noted was that the participants were becoming more familiar with the text types of recount and report and their associated frameworks. During the first meeting, there was some confusion about which was which.
However, now the terms were being used confidently with a total picture conveyed of the associated context, text and process. The participants' confidence had increased to the extent that the Rural School Team intended to conduct a parent workshop on the text types, Greg had inserviced the teachers of his school, and Maxine planned to hold a workshop to share the writing strategies with other teachers from surrounding rural schools.

**Activities and practices.** All teachers adapted the plan of action to suit their students' needs and their own teaching capabilities. Greg appeared to take a more confident approach than the others and innovated on the plan, using several successful ideas. This confidence, I believe, was based on various factors. Firstly, his position as principal of a school promoted confidence. Secondly, prior to the research, he had endeavoured to meet the needs of the secondary school by improving his writing programme so he was already in the process of change. Thirdly, he had inserviced his staff on the "Strategies for Teaching Children How to Write Narrative and Informational Texts". This inservicing of his staff gave Greg an edge over the other participants in the research by causing him to become fully familiar with the different types of texts as he had to become the "expert" to impart the knowledge to the other teachers of his school.
In comparison to Greg, Rhonda still lacked confidence in teaching informational texts. She was having difficulty recognising them in life and was unable to find examples of the different text types to show to the children prior to writing. This lack of knowledge also was causing problems in her teaching, particularly in the area of the children's analysis of their own writing, to the extent the she was procrastinating from holding lessons on the text types and avoiding marking the children's writing.

The work the teachers were doing in the classrooms was now affecting others outside the school. The parents of the Rural School needed to be informed about the text types so they could help their children with their homework. The Mixed School Team believed it was important that the secondary school teachers were aware of what was being taught in the primary school so that there could be continuity in the teaching of informational texts between Year 7 and 8.

**Social relationship: researcher.** During the second action cycle meeting changes were noticed in the roles played by the participants from the previous meeting. I, the facilitator, played a less dominant role, only twice having to be the expert, giving ideas on the teaching of
editing and linking writing to audience and purpose. For the majority of the time, I was able to play the role of interested observer, asking questions to clarify points made, yet allowing the bulk of the meeting to be directed by the teachers. It is clear that an expert is needed less as the teachers’ knowledge increases.

Social relationship: participants. The participants’ knowledge of these text types was increasing and with it their confidence to talk about them. This resulted in the teachers showing initiative by planning additional educational activities within the school and community to promote the writing of informational texts using the frameworks learnt in the Latham and Sloan workshop.

It was apparent that the Rural School Team and Greg, who now had the support of his staff as the result of his inservice on strategies for teaching the writing of informational texts, were in a fortunate position. The whole of the teaching staff of these schools was involved with improving their teaching of informational texts, therefore, each teacher was supporting the other. They had "critical friends" to turn to, for sharing ideas and seeking assistance.
On the other hand, Rhonda, being the only member in the school participating in the project, was "going it alone". Although eight of the twenty-four teachers in her school had attended the Latham and Sloan workshop, there was little communication between the other teachers and herself:

Beth: Greg was just talking about his school involvement. Has anyone else in your school been involved with what you are doing in the area of informational text types?

Rhonda: I don't know. I don't have contact with them. We don't get together and talk about what we are doing. I passed on our text analysis sheets to the Principal and he mentioned at the staff meeting that if any of them wanted a photocopy of them, they were available. A few people seemed keen on them but I don't know if anyone actually picked them up.

People, like the Year 3 teacher, and the Year 1 teacher (being out of college in the last few years) use this form of writing all the time with their classes. It's not something new to them. It's the only way they know how to teach it. With the other classes I really don't know if the other teachers are using these frameworks or not.

Without colleagues to support her within the school community, Rhonda was finding the change hard to accomplish. She needed to work out some way of communicating with them about what she was doing in writing and to enlist their collaboration. This she was finding a difficult task, because the position she occupied in her school was less influential than Greg's, who, being a principal, was in a better position to change the way
writing was taught in his school.

Unlike Greg, to inservice the other members of the staff at her school, Rhonda would have first had to inform her principal of the strategies for teaching informational texts. She would then have needed to convince him of the value of the project and to negotiate for time to be able to inservice her teaching colleagues. This would have required the arrangement of a suitable day and teacher relief for the classroom teachers—a factor involving time and money. Considering the obstacles she would have had to overcome, all demanding confidence, expert knowledge of the text types and powers of persuasion, it is no wonder, that Rhonda decided to "go it alone". Perhaps later, when her knowledge of these text types has improved and, with it, her confidence in teaching them, Rhonda will be able to talk with her colleagues and develop a supportive school environment in the area of teaching of informational texts. This factor of collegial support, I believe, is vital for changing teaching practice in schools. Change is easier if your colleagues are involved.
Discussion and Findings after the Second Cycle Meeting.

m) In what ways has the conceptual knowledge of the team members about the teaching of writing developed?

n) How have the team members' practices in the teaching of writing changed?

o) How did the teachers integrate the teaching of informational writing into the general curriculum?

p) How have the team members' values regarding the teaching of writing changed?

In the first cycle we observed some of the processes that the teachers went through in order to improve the writing of informational texts. They each implemented the same action plan but each modified it to suit his/her capabilities, the students' needs and the restrictions of time.

The sharing of concerns during the second cycle meeting and the resulting action plan revealed the following facts:
Knowledge. The teachers' knowledge of the frameworks of the text types was gradually improving. However, generally they were learning about the text types as they taught them, i.e., they were taking a text type, learning its framework, teaching the children how to write using this framework, then learning from the problems they encountered and overcame as they were instructing the students. Therefore, the teacher's knowledge of the text type frameworks and the associated language was limited to the ones they had taught.

It is apparent, therefore, that teachers are very practical people and learn by doing. This factor is significant for those of us who conduct inservice training for teachers. If we wish to update teachers, we must link the theory with practice by structuring the courses so that the teachers participate in activities which demonstrate the theory in practice. A lecture presenting new ideas is not enough. It must be accompanied by a step-by-step procedure to show the teachers where and how to implement the new idea.

Teachers need a basic plan to follow to implement change. They will then modify it, build on it and innovate from it and, finally, change the basic plan to meet their needs and those of their students. But, most important, they must have that plan with which to start.
Practices. At this stage, the teaching of language was becoming less fragmented with the plan assisting the integration of the different areas of language. Those teachers, who had to share their language classes with support teachers, found the plan beneficial as it gave direction and structure to the lessons. However, this sharing of classes affected the plan because there was insufficient time during each programmed session for the teacher to demonstrate writing then follow this session with the students writing and sharing. It is, therefore, apparent that to avoid this conflict with time, it would be better to have the class teacher concentrating on language instruction and the support teachers handling the other curriculum areas. Even this would require close liaison between the teachers as language exists in all subject areas and should not be taught in isolation.

Values. The values of the participants had developed since cycle one. The teachers believed that the text type frameworks were beneficial to their students for a number of reasons. Firstly, they gave structure and direction to the writing lessons. Secondly, the frameworks assisted the students’ preparation for writing by directing thoughts and research. Thirdly, they guided the organisation of facts and the writing and paragraphing of the text. Fourthly,
they gave direction to editing as the writer could use the framework as a checklist to see that all facets of the composition had been covered. Finally, they were useful as a guide to evaluation, i.e., whether the writer was able to structure the text logically and with suitable language.

The teachers valued these text type frameworks to the extent that they wished to inform parents and secondary teachers about them. By doing this the teachers hoped that the use of the frameworks would be supported at home and continued in secondary school.
Step 3: Implementation of Modified Action Plan, Observation and Reflection

g) How did the teachers attempt to implement the modified plan?

o) How did the teachers integrate the teaching of informational texts into other areas?

Between the second and third meeting a period of over ten weeks passed which included two weeks of school vacation. During this time the teachers enjoyed the freedom of the first step of the plan, i.e., choosing the text type according to need.

The majority of the teachers chose the text type for specific reasons. Alison continued report writing as she wanted to consolidate what the students had learnt. Her journal states:

It should give the Years 4-7 a second chance to complete a report. As some had trouble with the first it should give them less difficulty this time and increase their confidence in themselves. Also the couple of children who didn't follow the correct format the first time will have a chance to do so this time.

Some of the children were having trouble finding enough facts to write a properly structured report so Alison made
up a fact sheet for each child. This included the name of the animal and facts about it. The children had to sort the facts under the report framework headings then write about the given animal. This strategy was very successful because the children had enough facts now to write a full report without being limited by their lack of knowledge or research skills.

Maxine and Sue introduced the text type, procedure to the Years 1-3. They found that the children related well to this text type. It was easy "to immerse the children and model the framework" (Maxine 19.08.91). Sue found the Years 4-7 also enjoyed writing the procedure. Some even supported their writing with diagrams and illustrations. To introduce this text type, Sue developed a teaching strategy that consisted of a sheet divided into four large boxes labelled aim, requirements, method and conclusion. This was to "emphasize the structure and reinforce the idea of paragraphing" (Sue 23.07.91).

Rhonda introduced the procedure to her Year 7s by the actual experience of cooking popcorn:

_Rhonda_: Even the weakest student handled this text type extremely well because it was a step-by-step process, I think it is probably the easiest one for the children to do.
Greg also taught procedure but unlike the others, who asked the children to describe special activities, e.g., making mini pizzas, he linked it with his science lessons:

Greg: Teaching writing in the other subject areas helps with time. Time is always a problem in grouped grades.

Enjoying the freedom of choice, various other text types were taught by the teachers. Sue introduced exposition and explanation as oral lessons with the Years 4-7. Rhonda had success at teaching report writing to her Year 7’s by linking library research skills with her writing lesson. Greg chose the narrative text type and concentrated on this type of writing for the whole term. He selected the narrative because it fitted in well with the school programme for that period.

Greg: This term we had a paired reading program that was being run with parents. Also we had book week so we were doing short stories and using the conference approach to writing them. So I thought, "Well here’s a good chance to run with the narrative text and try and link that in." We are aiming at getting two short stories published for the term. At the end of the term we will look back and discuss what progress we’ve made with them.

The narrative was also attempted by the Years 1-3 but found too difficult. Maxine’s journal states:

Did evaluation of narrative. The only success was the first paragraph, i.e., the setting. Even then the
"where" or "when" were missing. It was a bit of a failure. Never mind, I'll try again later in the year (29.07.91).

This was a problem predicted by Latham & Sloan (1990), who suggested that the teaching of the narrative should be left to Year 4 as they considered it too difficult for younger children.

Only one participant did not teach any text types during this cycle as another teacher took his writing lessons. He failed to recognise that writing exists in all subject areas and shouldn't be taught as an isolated subject. Teaching writing in his social studies lessons could have made the writing of reports, procedures and explanations meaningful experiences for the students. Instead he failed to recognise this fact because he taught in a fragmented manner with each subject area isolated from the other.

The second step of the action plan was to use the problem solving technique to discover the framework from a written example. As in the first cycle, only one teacher did this. The others stated they did not understand what they had to do. Although this had been explained to them at the second cycle meeting, further information was needed:

Cris: There's been so much going on in the school ... its just filed there [in your mind] and just slips away until you finally lose it.
Sue: Does it mean that we give the children a bit of writing, e.g., exposition, and tell them that there are some arguments in the text and can they find them. Is that what you mean?

Beth: Not exactly. When I talk about problem solving, I mean the following procedure. You put an example of a text type on the blackboard. You read it through, then say to the children, "This piece is written following a recipe. Can you discover it?" You then go through the text, paragraph by paragraph, asking questions in such a way that the framework is discovered.

Maxine: So instead of just giving the children the framework and saying, "Right this is what we are going to do", you are saying, "Have a look at this".

Beth: Sometimes you can work from the your modelled writing. You write a model following the framework but not telling the children what it is. Then you get them to discover the recipe you followed.

This lack of knowledge, of how to problem solve a framework from a written example, continued to cause concern to the extent that I was required to demonstrate the problem solving technique in one teacher’s classroom. I persisted with this concept because I believed it was an important strategy to teach. By showing children that they can work out how something is done by problem solving a model, we are empowering them for life.

The third step of the action plan was the linking of the text type to audience and purpose so that students would be able to select the appropriate text type to use in life. However, this, for the majority of the teachers, was not an easy task. They did not fully understand what was meant by
audience or purpose and required further explanation:

Beth: We as teachers are inclined to think that the purpose of the writing is, it will be used in the class newspaper, or be displayed in the library. But this is not really why we write. We write because we want a job and need to argue that we are the most suitable applicant. This would be an exposition. Or we write because we had an "enjoyable holiday" and want to share it with our friends. This would be a recount. Or someone wants the recipe for our chocolate cake so we write a letter including the recipe—which would be a procedure. So that is what I mean by purpose.

The audience is the person(s) for whom it is written. When anything is written the author must consider the audience. So in that lesson you were taking today, Sue, about the West Coast Eagles—when you were arguing that your rural school oval would be a suitable venue for the Eagles, the audience would be the Eagles or anyone interested in football.

And to me you could link audience and purpose with your reading lessons. When your students have read a text ask them, "Why do you think this was written?" Discuss this, then ask "Who do you think it was written for?"

Only one teacher understood the concepts of audience and purpose. Greg had followed the action plan closely:

Greg: First of all we talked about the audience and purpose. We discussed that, then I used an example, Mem Fox's story called Sophie. I don't know whether you are familiar with Sophie? It is a very short story about Sophie's link with her Grandfather and Grandpa dies.

So I read the story out to the children and we discussed whether they enjoyed it. Was it suitable for the audience that I was reading it to? We tried to come up with an audience range first of all. I said, "Would Junior Primary children understand this?"
And they thought, "Yes, their brothers and sisters would understand it." So we went right back to Year 2. Then I said, "Year 7s, did you enjoy it?" And they said, "Yes". So I said, "There you are. It's got a fairly good range and I enjoyed it as well".

Then we talked about the purpose, what the purpose was behind it. And we talked about things, such as people do die and that it was hard to understand. We talked about cats and dogs that had died. We got involved in that sort of process and it took up a whole lesson. It wasn't intended that way but it did. Because of the feedback I thought, "Well, they want to go with this". We talked about their cats dying and their dogs dying and how they felt and all this sort of caper. So we came up with the audience and the purpose. Then I said, "When you read stories the author obviously must have a purpose." And I said, "Have you got any other books that you can think of, where you can see there was actually a purpose to it?" And then we got all the stories of other accidents.

They had this thing about dying so I thought I'd leave it for a while. Then they went off on other tangents, but they could see that there was a purpose to it. So I said, "When you are writing your short stories, don't think of just writing a story to please me or to just make it colourful using the things you know how to do, try and think of a good purpose for writing it." So then we got stories actually about dying cats and dying dogs which I knew would happen, but we got other ones as well that were more sophisticated, through the range of Years 5-7. When we had done that we did our first draft and they conferenced with their partners like they had been used to doing before. Then they did their editing and we had a Victor Vulture with me photocopying the overheads and modelling how I edit. Then we did a second draft and they conferenced with their partner and we published it. We brought it into the District Resource Centre and had it bound.

After that we did a second narrative. I said, "Well now try to think of another purpose for writing." I tried to steer them away from short stories but they were still keen to run with short stories. So I thought, "All right, leave it". They didn't want to write poems or fairy tales or myths or legends so I thought, "Fine. Do what you like".
This concept of writing for an audience and purpose was developed further in Greg's class. A "Write for a Purpose" page was added to the students' draft writing books. This page suggested different purposes for writing in relation to the text types. Prior to writing, after discussing their ideas with the teacher, the children recorded the purpose and possible audience for the text they were going to write. In this way, writing was done meaningfully in this Year 5-7 classroom. Greg records in the notes that he handed out at a teacher inservice:

Obvious need to stress audience and purpose for a piece of written work. Senior room found the newspaper a terrific teaching resource to promote discussion as to type of text, the writer's purpose and the audience intended.

The next step of the action plan, of showing children examples of the text types as they occur in life, preceded the introduction of the text types by Maxine and Greg. However, the other teachers had avoided this step as they still had insufficient knowledge of the text types to be able to recognise them in life.

*Sue:* I can't see them. I can't see them in the newspapers.

The teachers were still trying to use the frameworks to find texts in society when they instead should be using the
purpose, i.e., why the text was written. Their lack of understanding of purpose was compounding their identification problem. Another factor was, the teachers were learning about the text types as they taught each one so they were not familiar enough with the text types to be able to select suitable examples.

*Alison:* I’m just trying to use the ones that are relevant to the library.

*Beth:* Which ones do you think are relevant to the library?

*Alison:* I haven’t got that far yet.

*Beth:* So you are just reading up about the frameworks as you are going along?

*Alison:* Yes.

The fifth step of the action plan, of orally following the framework of the text type before writing, was valued by the majority of the teachers.

*Maxine:* We use the recount framework when we are telling news.

*Sue:* The procedure was quite easy to do orally .... I do a lot of oral work as I think it is an important part of the lesson.

*Maxine:* They can hear other children’s ideas. If they’ve gone through a piece first orally, then they have a fair idea of what they are able to do, and they can get started as soon as they get back to their seats.

*Cris:* They’re picking things up from each other.

*Alison:* It also helps the students who have trouble
writing and spelling. They can try out the text orally first.

The rural school found the frameworks particularly useful as a guide for the children when they were preparing their talks for the English Speaking Board Competition. This required the children to prepare a talk and present it to a visiting examiner. Sue’s journal states:

I am really pleased with the children’s recognition to have structure and therefore organisation in their work. They are prepared to tackle the thinking parts of introductions and conclusions (20.08.91).

Unlike the others, Rhonda had trouble understanding why using the text type orally was important:

Beth: The more I think about it, there is a need to work orally with the children with these text types, because that’s what they are going to use in life. You use so many oral texts, like when you are debating you are using the exposition framework.

Rhonda: That’s a horrible thing that you’ve just said though. Why are we putting so much emphasis on the text types if children are going to use them orally in life?

Beth: Because that gives them power in life if they can use them orally.

Rhonda: But why are we emphasising the written then, if children are going to use them orally?

Beth: Well that’s why I am saying, we ought to be giving more emphasis to the oral text.

Thinking about it, I would do the text types orally until the children are competent, then ask them to write. In that way I wouldn’t be hindering the
students who can't write a lot of the stuff. Those students in your Year 7 who can't write very well are going to be empowered if they can do it orally. Then we can build on that oral background to teach the written text.

The sixth step of the action plan, of modelling, was implemented by the majority in similar ways described at the second meeting. However, one participant found the sixth step of our plan difficult to do. Modelling to Rhonda was not an easy task:

Rhonda: I hate modelling.

Beth: Why do you hate it?

Rhonda: You have to have a really good story in mind. You have to have a good idea of what you are going to write about when you write in front of the students.

Beth: Yes, you have to be the students' expert, don't you?

Rhonda: I write naturally. I mean I do a lot of personal writing and if it was something like that I'd have no problem with it. But when you have to write a procedure, or a narrative or something, you've got to invent something to write about.

The others were growing more confident at writing in front of their classes, modifying the process of modelling to suit the needs of their students and the restrictions of time. They believed that showing children how to follow the framework, structuring the text and selecting appropriate language was a valuable strategy.
The seventh step of the action plan was for the children to first share their writing with their peers for audience value, then check it to see whether it fulfilled the purpose, and finally, if it followed the framework. However, this step was only partially done by the majority of the teachers. The sharing was generally limited to the teacher conference, volunteers reading in front of the class and published copies being displayed in the library. Rarely did the teachers incorporate with the sharing, the peer evaluation of the work, i.e., peers commenting on whether the writer had followed the framework or used the language suitable for the text type. Instead, peer evaluation was limited to a comment regarding their enjoyment of the story, and was influenced by the social acceptance of the child, particularly in the senior classes.

Greg overcame this problem, of peer sharing and peer evaluation being influenced by the child’s social status, by developing a positive attitude towards evaluation, modelling the process himself and structuring the sharing sessions so that all children knew what to do. He developed a system of "Buddy Conferencing" for sharing during the writing lessons:

Greg: They are encouraged to only interrupt and discuss work with their partner at stages that are convenient to both, and at the end of the lesson.
Greg records:

Towards the end of the lesson, students are asked to read their work to their "Buddy" and then one or two share with the class.

The next lesson is spent editing only. A quick look at the "Checklist for Proof Reading", then each child reads their work to their partner. It is important that the child who is reading makes the changes, if any. The listener can only help or suggest (30.10.91).

In this way, sharing became an important component of the writing session, fostering responsibility and improvement.

The eighth and ninth steps of the action plan required the teacher to show how to edit a draft piece of writing, then the students to follow the process demonstrated. However, although the majority of the teachers complained at our last meeting that their children were not editing their work, few of the teachers actually followed the plan and held lessons on editing.

At the last meeting, the teachers of the rural school expressed concern that the senior children were not editing their work, so the K-3 teacher outlined the editing techniques she taught her children to make them independent and responsible for finding their own errors. The other teachers agreed that she was running a good programme yet none of them asked her for further information so as to
continue this editing instruction with Years 4-7.

Beth: You outlined some excellent strategies for editing last time. Have any of the teachers adopted your techniques?

Maxine: I don’t know. I haven’t asked them. I’m not really in the staffroom much.

Beth: Have any of the other teachers asked for further information on editing from you?

Maxine: No.

I followed this up by asking the other teachers about their editing.

Beth: What have you done to assist the children to edit their work?

Sue: Not enough. The seniors have a poor attitude. They’re not confident. So I feel that pointing out errors is giving them negative feedback.

Working with the same group of children, Cris had reminded them of the importance of editing but didn’t have time to hold the actual lesson as stated in the action plan.

Aware of limitations of time, Alison modified the plan by giving the children a copy of a recount she had written. Step by step she taught them how to edit, marking in capital letters and punctuation. They called it "being teacher detectives". However, she was unable to immediately follow this instruction, with the children using the
demonstrated process on their own pieces of writing, because she did not have enough time.

Rhonda, of the Mixed School Team, was having a struggle with teaching editing.

Rhonda: The children wrote a report for me and they handed in what they thought was published. Then I began looking at conferencing and editing so I gave it back to them after I'd actually used one of our check lists to mark it. I hadn't written any comments on it or given them a mark out of ten. I gave them a positive build-up of "how terrifically they had done this, but I would like them to look at these again to see if they could improve on their writing". Well, they actually took it away less reluctantly than I had envisaged they might--because they had published it with pictures and borders and photographs. They didn't change very much [of the text] because I guess it was a fairly well written piece in the first place. They had actually gone through a researching process and published it. I can understand them not wanting to put red biro marks over something they had considered as published in the first place.

By asking the children to edit their published work, Rhonda was showing a lack of understanding of the position of editing in the writing process. This lack of understanding is also exhibited by these comments:

Rhonda: I'm just concerned that my whole term's work has been writing. There's not a lot of editing and conferencing going on.

The other member of the Mixed School Team, was developing editing skills in his class through Buddy Conferencing and
Victor Vulture sessions. Greg had shared the progress of these ideas at each session. The teaching of editing commenced at the beginning of the year with photocopying a child’s work on a transparency and demonstrating editing using the overhead projector. The strategies he taught during these lessons, had now developed into two distinctive sessions, the "Buddy Conference" and the "Victor Vulture Session":

Greg: We had a different Victor Vulture. What I did was to take one story and I wrote it out three times on large sheets of brown paper. I split the class up into three groups and I chose three group leaders. I said, "You run it. You do what you like." So we had different things happening within the groups, but basically they had a Victor Vulture on the work.

Then we got back together as a whole class and we talked about what they had done. One of the groups actually managed to get right through doing the editing, two of the groups didn’t. At the end of it we talked about what had happened in their groups and then each group leader, or someone in the group read out what they had done.

The follow-up lesson to that was for them to finish it off and to give it to the child who wrote it. The child then selected the one that she thought the best kept story—without losing the track of the story—and she has since had that typed up and published.

After the group Victor Vulture the children went back to their partner once again and looked at the points that were in the back of their book telling them the things to look for. I said, "Well, what you were doing in your group I want you now to do together." They had lots of different models there. Not only was I doing it but the older students were also doing it and children within their own year level were doing the things that I had been doing. So they went back and then conferenced far better than they have ever done before. They were far more critical of each other, which I thought was good. Quite often there
was an argument but as long as there was someone around to mediate it was okay. I think their conferencing and editing took on a whole new meaning. Whereas before, conferencing and editing was: they would read it and then say, "OK, that seems fine. Now you read mine." Do you know what I mean? Because they were more anxious for the other partner to read their’s. So I said, "What you have been doing in your groups, that’s what I want you to do, to be critical of each other".

The students of Greg’s class wrote first in a conferencing book. It was in here that all the editing took place:

Greg: Well, they had a conferencing book which can be a mess as long as it is legible. I don’t mind what they do in the conferencing book. I scribble out myself when I am modelling. We have a set of rules: if you’re going to put a line through it, you put one line through it—all those sort of mechanical things you set up in your own classroom. I think you need to try and emphasise that as much as possible and demonstrate to them on the board. I sort of say to them, "Well, you know when I write on the board, it can look very messy but when it comes down to something that has to be legible, something that is important then I’ve got to do it neatly. So the final copy must be the best you can do.

The following are points that Greg recorded about his requirements for editing:

Children are allowed to cross out, delete or add where they see fit. Paragraphs are indicated by missing a line. Partners are instructed and encouraged to identify verbs and nouns, discuss suitable adverbs and adjectives, and use a thesaurus when necessary.

Once the child is happy with the final draft they are instructed to read their original purpose and audience statement. If the work is to be published mothers do the typing, suitable cover pages are added and the work is bound. Some of the more capable students use
the school IBM computer or use their own home computers to type their work (30.10.91).

Both Greg and Maxine had developed editing strategies that worked well in their classes. However, it was interesting to note that none of the teachers in their teams copied, or innovated on these two teachers’ ideas. They, instead, chose to continue on with what they were already doing.

The last steps of the action plan were to meet the individual requirements of the two teams. The Mixed School team was concerned about the Year 7 students’ transition to high school with regards to continuing informational text instruction. Rhonda made contact with the senior high school, which her students would be attending, and Greg made contact with his. The result was that I was asked to address the English staff of one of the Secondary schools on the topic of Informational Text writing. This was followed by a further request to demonstrate, with a Year 8 class, the teaching of report writing and editing skills.

The Rural Team had carried out their plan to hold a workshop to instruct the parents on the informational text types and their framework. The weekly newsletter invited parents to attend an evening workshop to learn about the text types being taught at school so they could assist their children with their homework:
Cris: The roll up was very disappointing. The main people who were not happy about what was going on with reporting, by just not knowing, didn’t turn up—which was disappointing.

The people that did turn up, from the survey we gave to them, loved it. They thought it was very informative and basically can’t wait for the next one.

Maxine: The comments that came out of it were super positive. They thought it was great that now they could understand what their students were doing. It was very practical for them. They really enjoyed it.

Alison: It was a different way of thinking, but they could see the value of it—when the students went away to High School.

Cris: You see they really had the same problems that the students had.

Maxine: When they were preparing to write the report and classifying the facts, we had lots of them arguing about which fact should go into which box. It was great to watch these parents really getting stuck into it. It was a really enjoyable evening.

Alison: But some were a bit worried that it was too structured.

Beth: Yes, but things are structured in life, aren’t they? I mean if you learn football, you have rules to follow to learn football.

Sue: I found with the report they did earlier, before we taught the frameworks, the students had gone home to their Mum saying, "I’ve got to write all I know about an animal", and they came back with headings about food, appearance and living. So people do want structure.

Alison: However, once they had had a go, arguing about which boxes to put the facts in and realising that their decision was OK as long as they could justify it, then they could see there was freedom. You know, freedom to do whatever they wanted to do.
The Rural School intended to introduce the parents to the other text types at a future workshop during Term Four.

In reviewing what was done during the implementation of the second cycle action plan, it is clear that the teachers are continuing to take the basic plan and modify it according to their capabilities, the needs of their students and the restrictions of time.
Step 1: Reconnaissance: Sharing Problems and Concerns Resulting from the Second Plan of Action

h) What specific problems did the teachers encounter and how did they overcome them?

The following are the collated problems and concerns expressed by the Mixed School and Rural School Teams at the Third Cycle meeting:

1. Writing following a framework was too structured for Year 1s.

This concern was put forward by a teacher parent who had joined the Rural School Team second and third meeting.

Parent: Yes. I think the optimum would be to not have the Year 1s doing it. I think it is inhibiting their freedom of writing. I mean they are battling to really get going and they have then this big structure--this framework to consider and they are not writing very much at all because I think they are frightened of not fitting into the framework. I know it can't be done at this school because we've got three year levels together, but I think it would be better left until they feel comfortable putting pen to paper.
The teachers of Greg's school also agreed. They found it was necessary in Year 1/2:

- to modify the terminology and in some cases not to refer to or give the text type name or framework (30.10.91).

However, it was generally considered that the teachers needed to be aware of the text type framework so that they could correctly model these types of writing and guide the children's development so that they were progressing towards writing properly structured texts.

2. The structured approach takes the spontaneity from writing.

Sue: I use to make these most wonderful books with the kids. I used a big picture for example of a football player and say "put yourself in my shoes for one day". I don't think there is enough of just writing, using your imagination.

This problem was specific to this team member. It was considered that the problem was caused by the inability to recognise the text types in society and link audience and purpose to the writing. Therefore the frameworks were being used, not as a meaningful guide to fulfil the purpose of the writer, but instead more of a writing exercise. The
children were writing "a report on ..." or "a recount about ..." instead of linking it to a purpose by thinking, "I need to tell about my visit to 'Scitech'. What would be the appropriate type of text to use?" It is hoped, that as Sue becomes more familiar with the different text types, she will be able to say to her class, "If we are going to put ourselves in the shoes of a football player for a day, what type of text should we use?" The choice of the text type, e.g., a recount, would result in the associated framework guiding the writing.

3. The inability to locate these text types in society.

This concern was also expressed at the second cycle meeting and was continuing to be a problem. Without the teachers being able to see how these texts were used in life, they would be unable to teach informational writing in a meaningful way.

The action resulting from this concern was the handing out of examples of the text types from the newspaper:

Beth: I went through Friday's paper and cut out all these text types. I have a bundle here for you. I was able to get an example of every text type without much trouble. I was able to do this because I was not looking for the framework but the reason for which it was written and the language used. Look at this advertisement. It was written to argue a case. The language used is emotive with connectives associated
with reasoning. So you predict it is an exposition. Now check for the framework. Can you see the first paragraph is a statement of the point of view, the following paragraphs--of one sentence each--are arguments supported by evidence, and the final paragraph is the conclusion? So it most definitely is an exposition although it is an advertisement.

The teachers needed a lot of support and practical examples to help them gain an understanding of the concept of these text types existence in life.

4. Difficulty in telling the difference between narrative and recount text types.

This was a problem discussed by the Mixed School Team. It arose from my visit to observe Greg’s editing sessions:

Beth: A few weeks ago I visited Greg and watched a marvellous Victor Vulture session with his Year 5/6/7s. At the end of the session we got to discussing the difference between recount and narrative. It posed quite a problem because they are quite similar. The other staff members joined in and I left them to solve the problem--what was the difference between narrative and recount? Greg decided to pose the question to his class and take them to the library to get them to solve the problem by comparing texts. How did you get on?

Greg: Well, they used their own books that they were reading at the time because we are doing this paired reading business. After a long conversation and a long argument backwards and forwards they realised there was a recount within some narratives but they felt that the language was coloured a little bit differently, such as direct speech.
The children, in the senior room, felt that a recount can be a narrative but ... actually the students were funny. They said that the narrative is sort of like stretching the truth. You can be talking about something you have done but colour it with different language.

It is interesting, actually. The staff came to the same conclusion in the end. There was a lot of arguing going backwards and forwards discussing things such as myths and legends. Are they recounts or narratives?

**Beth:** That would be a narrative--anything like that, that tells a story.

I think the important point is that it must have an initiating event, which a recount hasn‘t. You know when you are reading through a narrative and you think, "Ah-ha!--you know in *Little Red Riding Hood* when Mother warns her not to talk to strangers? Then when the Wolf comes along you know that this is going to be the problem. Or, perhaps you are in a boat at sea and a storm comes up. That sort of gives you a little hint that something is going to go wrong. Then you predict what will happen. Then you’ve got your climax and your resolution.

**Greg:** Does that mean that the initiating event has to be an initiating complication? Can‘t the initiating event be that you have hopped on board the bus and go off down the road?

**Beth:** No, I think it has to be something that follows through into your complication.

**Greg:** I see. Right. Because that was another thing that came up in conversation.

This discussion was an important one. Without a clear understanding of the difference between narratives and recounts the teaching of the texts would be confused—the teachers would be modelling and accepting recounts for narratives.
However, Greg believed that although it was important for the teachers to have a clear idea of recounts and narratives and to be aware that the two can be combined, it was important that instruction in the primary school be kept to the pure forms of recounts and narratives and not confuse the children by mixing them:

Greg: I think you have to be careful with this. I talked about it with my staff and we felt that you have to be reasonably clear on it and say to the children that there is this overlap but not to get too wrapped up in it all.

With the seniors, they could understand it, but with the Years 3/4s and 1/2s if we started saying that there is this grey area between a recount and narrative they would get confused. The staff are getting a little bit concerned about that and saying, "Oh no, I don't want to approach the children about that. Leave us alone. We're happy with what we are doing."

Beth: I think this is why Latham and Sloan said that narrative should be brought in at Year 4--obviously because it is quite a difficult text. But then again the children are immersed in a lot of narrative and they are very familiar with it.

This discussion was specific to the Mixed School Team mainly because of Greg's interest. His style of teaching allowed the children to join him in problem solving the narrative-recount difference from actual reading texts. This difference was not discussed with the Rural School Team which had met prior to my visit to Greg's class.
5. No time to meet with other teachers on the staff to discuss the teaching of writing.

At the previous meeting, time was also an issue but that was the case of too little time to teach when sharing classes in the Rural School. The above concern, however, was expressed by the majority of the teachers of the two teams. There was little time to read or discuss teaching ideas during the day:

Beth: You know, we are learning a lot from you people and the problems you are having. Like Cris today said that he had not had time to read through the stuff until last night and he looked embarrassed about it so I said, "Look that is such a valid thing to say, because that represents a heap of teachers out there." And you do. You get so much stuff handed to you that often you don’t have time to read it. Alison said something earlier about time too.

Alison: Yes. I just find that I’m only here for one day and sometimes I miss out seeing anyone. Sue comes in at half past one and I’m working. I don’t see Sue very often. And Cris is out on morning tea duty so I don’t see Cris. I work closely with Maxine because I’m in her room much more, but some of the other staff I never see.

This lack of time to talk prevented the staff from discussing with Maxine her editing plan.

Rhonda, in a large school, was having similar problems. She was finding there was no continuity between the Year 6
and the Year 7 in the area of writing instruction.

Although the other Year 7 teacher and Rhonda sometimes discussed informational text writing, she had a problem with communicating with the Year 6 teachers:

Rhonda: I never speak to the Year 6 teachers about what they are teaching.

Beth: So there is no networking there to prepare those students for next year.

Rhonda: A few times we’ve tried that. I think our admin’ staff are aware of how valuable and important that is because we’ve set up little cell groups and gone off supposedly to meet for ten or fifteen minutes. But we usually get side-tracked by one important issue and never actually get around to sharing. Well I don’t know about the other cells but the Year 6/7 cell doesn’t. It may have happened once this year or once last year.

Greg: That you met?

Rhonda: Yes, as a cell to discuss good ideas that we have discovered in our teaching.

We have a staff meeting agenda book and if you want anything discussed or brought to the staff’s attention you can write it in. The person who is chairing the staff meeting would say, "Rhonda, you wanted to discuss informational text writing." So we have that access, but time is the essence.

Beth: So as a whole your staff meetings don’t have a focus of professional development. You wouldn’t be able to get up and talk for long about informational texts and what you are doing?

Rhonda: No.

Beth: So, generally there is no sharing of new or good things that you have discovered in your classroom.

What about you, Greg. Do you share ideas like this?
Greg: It is easy at our school—almost every recess, every lunchtime—talking professionally about things that have happened.

Rhonda: We would do that more on a year level basis—like there are two of each year levels. I talk a lot to the other Year 7 teachers about what he is doing in the classroom.

Beth: Now you were saying that the other Year 7 teacher was starting to use these frameworks. What sort of working together—continuity—have you two had now with your Year 7s?

Rhonda: Since I've been away for most of the last two weeks we haven't really looked at what we've been doing. But the other Year 7 teacher seems to think that I've got a lot of knowledge on it because I am doing this action research. I sort of say, "Well I've tried this and this is what I did," and he'll say, "Well I'm going to do this". But see we don't have much time to even share that!

Beth: In the staffroom, Rhonda, do you ever share teaching ideas? For instance I went to Greg's school. I don't know whether it was just because I was there, but the teachers were discussing professional things, exchanging ideas at recess times and lunchtimes, good ideas they have used in the classroom. Does that ever happen in your school?

Rhonda: No. If you've got a problem the staff are great. You walk in and you will be saying, "Oh, that child, I can tear my hair out!" and people will start to give me background information if they have previously taught the child or suggest strategies. But not about actual teaching tactics. We don't seem to have the time. Like at staff meetings time is the essence. There seems to be so much trivia, paper work to get through and announcements. We're streamlining that, though, by things being written on the blackboard, e.g., "These brochures have arrived", rather than being announced at staff meetings. It's loosening up there but we don't very often share ideas because we don't seem to be able to find the time.

It appears from the above that the majority of the teachers didn't value the sharing of educational ideas enough to
make time to do it. Greg, however, did value it and his
enthusiasm stimulated the other members of his teaching
staff to be as interested as he was in improving the
teaching of writing in the school. The enthusiasm of the
principal for improving teaching practice is obviously an
important factor in developing educational discourse
between staff members.

6. Problems with classroom management, ie, programming
   and organising the language block of time.

This problem was specific to Rhonda. She taught reading,
writing, spelling, speaking and listening in a fragmented
way in spite of having language for an hour each day. Her
concern resulted in an additional meeting with me to
discuss organising reading to support writing and
subsequently a classroom demonstration.

Revision of thematic concern. The concerns expressed
during the reconnaissance stage of the third cycle were no
longer common to all participating teachers. The problems
were now more specific to the individual teacher’s
requirements. Some of the problems were related to the age
level of the class, some to the teacher’s stage of
development with regard to their knowledge about
informational texts, and some pertained to the organisation
and management of each participant’s school.

The lack of a single, shared thematic concern meant the action cycles had fulfilled their purpose. In general, the teachers felt that the meetings were no longer required as they were now able to teach informational texts and felt confident to continue alone without the guidance of an expert, or the restrictions of an action plan.

**Step 2: The Teachers’ Plans for Future Action**

Upon reflection, Greg intended to modify the hypothesis to guide his future action:

Greg: I was having another look last night at our hypothesis and I was wondering whether there perhaps could be a small change to that now for me.

Beth: What would that be?

Greg: We have got:

"If our knowledge of the frameworks of informational writing and the conventions associated with the different text types improves, then the children’s writing will also improve."

I would probably add now to that "the children’s writing and knowledge will also improve."

It is not just a sort of objective thing now. It’s become a lot more discussing and problem solving because, as we talked about before, it’s not cut and dried any longer. The children are realising there are some grey areas. Even though they understand what is required of a report, narrative and a recount, they are also realising that in the real world such as the newspapers, there are many, many examples of texts
that sort of interrelate. They sort of cross over so that there is just not the pure form of each example. Does that make sense?

**Beth:** Yes. That's exactly what I found.

**Greg:** So the children's knowledge has improved a lot.

**Beth:** That's great. So what changes do you intend to make to the action plan?

**Greg:** Well, I'm not going to make any changes. I'm going to keep going the way I am going, but I'm not in any hurry at the moment. As I said to you before, I'd rather do something and do it well than just try to get through each text type ... I think I'll keep going on with the narrative 'til the end of term.

**Beth:** You've worked on three text types a term, roughly, haven't you?

**Greg:** Yes.

**Beth:** That was valuable to know, Greg, because people have been asking me how many text types they anticipate doing per term. So I will be able to say that you did about three a term and that's all that you could fit in. They'd agree that's an acceptable rate.

**Greg:** I think, if you press them along too fast—remember I've got three grades in the room as well—so with the younger ones, if you push too fast, it just becomes a blur to them.

I'm going to spend next week going back through and using the newspaper as much as possible, discussing with them the different examples and see if we can really "nut out" the grey areas in between so that they understand that there is not just a pure form. That they are not just looking for the pure form of each text type. I think that's really important.

**Beth:** I think that's a great idea, Greg, because that shows them the power of writing. You can combine the text types according to need. You might want to start with a recount of an event, then end up with an exposition to argue a case, using the recount as evidence. You can start writing using one framework, then complete it using another. What you are doing is
showing the children the application of these frameworks in life situations.

Greg: I think that is the way to go and I feel much more comfortable with it as well.

So I’ll be spending quite a lot of time on that. Once I feel, myself, that they understand it as much as they possibly can then we will go on to another area.

The Rural School Team were planning their future action:

Alison: I would like to follow it up what I’ve done in report writing and ask them do their own facts sheet.

Cris: I think it is important to do it a second time and I imagine a third time ... 

Maxine: Because then the students really own it all. You are still there to help them, certainly, but they have to then go and really think about the facts that they have to find out—what they can get from their book. I mean you have been through it twice, they know the steps to follow so you really should see a little bit more progress.

Cris: I think if you incorporate it with this [overview] checklist in the Senior Room—because this is what you are trying to get the students to do, isn’t it, as well as trying to get independent workers.

Maxine: Then they are responsible for saying, "My introduction is not quite working. I’m going to have to ... ". They are seeing what they have to do without us actually saying, "You’re not doing this very well. Go away and think about it." I mean they can actually make that judgement for themselves—so they are judging their own writing as well.

The above is evidence of all of the teachers of this school contributing ideas to improve the writing ability of the children. Also the teachers planned to incorporate more
professional sharing into their staff meetings:

Maxine: I think when we have our staff meetings we can share what we have been doing, where we are up to, whether we have come across any problems and what we like doing.

Later in the year they proposed to hold another workshop for the parents to introduce them to the other text types, i.e., explanation, procedure and exposition.

Working alone, Rhonda was still battling with the text types. Her plan of action was to implement a form of recount, the diary:

Beth: Well, where do you think you will go from now? What’s your text type that you are going to try? Are you going to work on your diary with the camp coming up?

Rhonda: Probably, and I think I will.

Beth: You said before that you have written down in your programmes things that you don’t feel courageous enough to teach the children to write. Perhaps you should ...

Rhonda: I keep putting them off until it’s going to be the last week and I’m going to have to teach both of them. I keep choosing something that is easier. Then I have to post programme because, "oh no I can’t do letters today because I haven’t got those copies."

Beth: So do you sort of set the task, rather than look at what fits in naturally with what the students need in the classroom?

Rhonda: Oh, no. I specifically chose to programme for diaries because I knew I wanted to teach diary writing because they were going on camp and one of the things that we ask them to do is keep a diary.
Beth: It seems to me that the first thing that you have to do is to bring in a diary that you are writing to show that you value this form of writing. Share with them the things that you have written and say to them that next week they will be having a go at writing their own diary.

Rhonda: That is really foreign to the way I have ever taught before. I never sort of construed a situation where I have written something and taken it in and shown the class.

Beth: If you do that it shows you value writing—that people do it—that you do it. And these are the sort of things you write.

Rhonda still needed the reassurance and help of a specialist. The other participants were planning independently and no longer needed my help.

Plans for future monitoring. It was generally decided that the checklists and pupil questionnaires were of value and their use would be continued as the teachers required. Greg, confident in his teaching, particularly valued the pupil questionnaire:

Beth: What about the monitoring things that we put out? How do you feel about those checklists and that? Do you think they are of value or do you think they are too structured?

Greg: No, I think they are of value. It is important to go back and review each cycle and have a look. I think it is important also from the children’s point of view—you get a better feed back from them because they are having a chance to have their say as well. I think they are enjoying that. They are being quite honest.

Beth: How often do you use that Pupil Questionnaire?
Greg: At the end of each cycle, I've been using it at
the end of each text type. With the narrative I did
one in between as well because I wasn't too sure of
how they were feeling because it was taking so long.
We did two cycles within that narrative text type, so
I've used it twice.

Beth: Were the results different?

Greg: Slightly. The better children picked it up
straight away. With one or two, The questionnaire
confirmed my "gut feeling". They were having
problems. The second cycle showed that they were much
more comfortable in themselves so that was important.

So not only were the pupil questionnaires useful for
locating the point of error, but also to confirm the
teacher's predictions about how the children were receiving
the lesson.
Reflections of the Researcher after the Third Cycle Meeting

j) What support did the teachers need to implement the action plan?

k) In working as members of this group, to what extent did the language and the discourse used by the members change when used in the context of teaching writing?

l) In working as members of this group, to what extent did the participants' roles in the group, school and community change?

The tone of the third cycle meeting was very confident with the majority of the teachers satisfied with what they were doing. They had enjoyed having the common purpose of improving their teaching of writing by using the text frameworks. All, except one, were happy to conclude the action research meetings. Rhonda was still struggling to teach the text types and wished to continue with the support that the meetings gave her.

During the third cycle meeting with the Rural School, I used a more structured approach than previously. At other meetings, I allowed the teachers to share freely their knowledge, practices and concerns. However, this time I
had specific things to find out and so I had planned questions to ask at the meeting (Appendix 7). The resulting responses have caused me not to recommend this practice in future action research meetings as it inhibits the freedom and spontaneity of the sharing. The participants are not as relaxed when they do not have control over their sharing, and, therefore, do not "tell all" but only what the researcher "seeks to find". Fortunately, I learned from my mistake and did not repeat the practice at the Mixed Team Meeting. In action research, it appears it is important for the researcher to use a non-directive approach, guiding the respondents to express their true feelings and opinions about teaching, rather than follow a direct plan of questioning.

**Language and discourse.** The participants had developed not only their own but also their students' ability to talk about the texts. When I was observing a senior class in the Rural School, I heard one of the children say, "That's just like a recount!". This use of the text type language was also evident in the junior classes.

**Maxine:** My students are using it. Once they have done their writing I ask them what they have written, and they'll look at the frameworks (because I have them in my room) and I'll say to them, "Do you think it fits a recount?". They reply, "Oh, yes it fits the recount because of ... ", and so they are very much aware of
it. They are quite happy to say, "This is what it is... I'm going to write a report today. I'm going to write about Indians or... So it's evidence. It's nothing new, I mean it happens every day now, so it's common language. They are quite happy to use it. It doesn't worry them in the least.

It appears that when a group, be it adults or children, have a similar interest, then a common language will develop to facilitate discussion. The advantage of the common language that the students and teachers had developed here, was the continuity between classes and schools. Although the Mixed School Team had never met with the Rural School Team, they would have been able to discuss informational writing because they had developed a common language. Their students would also have had this capability. I believe this was the result of sharing the same facilitator for their meetings and basing their discussions on the same reference book by Latham and Sloan (1990).

Activities and practices. All teachers continued to adapt the action plan to their capabilities, their students' needs and the restrictions of time. Some steps of the plan were left out by a few teachers. This may have been due to their lack of knowledge or the fact that several had not read the second plan, relying on their memory to guide their actions. The reason for this could have been that the plan was sent to them by post, arriving...
after the two week holiday break between terms. It is evident that communication sent to teachers should be followed by personal contact to clear problems and stimulate action.

At the third action meeting, the majority of the participants complained at the lack of time in their schools to discuss educational matters, i.e., share teaching ideas across year levels. Evidently it is an acceptable practice in some schools to discuss child behaviour at recess and lunch breaks, but not educational matters, e.g., successful ideas in the teaching of writing.

In response to the participants' needs, the action plan had steps for teaching editing to the students. However, several teachers preferred to continue the methods they currently used for encouraging editing. They were prepared to implement a new idea such as teaching informational texts using frameworks, but not change their established practices in teaching editing—even though they had stated at the second action research meeting that their students were not editing their work well.

However, the action research carried out by the two teams was successful in changing the teaching of writing. The majority of the teachers stated they had made changes to
their language teaching because of our action plans:

Maxine: My teaching of writing has changed because of our research action. Now I’ve got set things to teach and I’ve got the frameworks to follow, so that makes it very easy.

Sue: My teaching has changed by taking the frameworks into my repertoire.

Cris: My teaching is changing but I don’t think it is to do with the action research. I’ve had difficulty carrying out the action plan because of the amount of time administration duties take up. However, it has made me think about writing. I would probably incorporate the ideas into future writing instruction.

Alison: In the library, I am now focussing my teaching around a text type. I am giving time to teaching a framework for the children to follow for research and projects.

Rhonda: Following the frameworks the children are finding it easier to write rather than being faced by a blank page.

Sireg: When a mother, previously very "anti-school", phoned me concerning my introductory lesson about narrative writing and told me her son thought that, not only the lesson was good, but that he believed he "knew everything about how to write a story", then I knew this had to be a winner!

Social relationship: researcher. My role as an expert now was different. Instead of being an expert who directed, as in the first cycle, I was now more of a consultant, suggesting strategies to improve practice or overcome problems.

During the three action cycles, I had learnt a lot from the teachers. Responding to their concerns, I was required to
research more to gain further knowledge about the text types so as to make their use more meaningful to the teachers and students. Stimulated by this need, my knowledge about the text types had increased over the period of the research.

**Social relationship: participants.** Roles had changed within the groups, particularly the Rural School. Cris had become the observer and Maxine the decision maker. Alison no longer called herself "a dinosaur" as she no longer felt out of date with her teaching knowledge. Sue, however still felt intimidated by my "high powered knowledge", and, I believe will feel more comfortable about teaching writing now she no longer had to report to the group and a specialist.

The Mixed School Team had a relationship characterised by independence of each other. I thought Rhonda would have tried some of Greg’s ideas, but up to the end of the research she hadn’t. However, she did encourage the other Year 7 teacher in her school to try some of the strategies we were using in our research, so her confidence about her knowledge of the text types was improving.

Greg, stimulated by our action research meetings, brought about changes in the writing in his school and introduced
the idea of teaching the text types in the secondary school that the majority of his children would attend.
Discussion and Findings of the Third Cycle

m) In what ways has the conceptual knowledge on the teaching of writing of the team members developed?

n) How have the practices for the teaching of writing of the team members changed?

o) How did the teachers integrate the teaching of informational texts into the general curriculum?

p) In working together as members of a group, have the teachers' values regarding the teaching of writing changed?

During this study the focus of observation has been the processes through which the teachers progressed in order to improve the teaching of the writing of informational texts. The participants in this research commenced the programme not knowing what to teach or how to start teaching these texts, even though they had all attended the Latham and Sloan workshop. At the conclusion of the research, the majority of these teachers felt confident in their ability to teach this type of writing. They had progressed from needing a step-by-step plan put together with a specialist, showing them how to implement informational text writing
into their teaching programme, to being able to devise their own plans of action. This step-by-step basic plan, I believe, was an important component in directing the change in these teachers’ classroom practices. It was the starting point on which the teachers could innovate. Thus, the majority of the teachers who started with the basic plan of action were able to implement successfully informational text writing in their classrooms.

Knowledge. At the commencement of this research, the teachers stated they had no knowledge of the schematic structure, i.e., frameworks, of the informational texts. They now had a knowledge of the text types and frameworks but the majority of the teachers were stumbling at recognising informational texts in life, i.e., books, newspapers and so on. This resulted in our discovery that text types in life are classified according to purpose, not by structure. The language used is also related to purpose and audience. Therefore, purpose and audience are vital components of the writing practice. Thus, writing that is not guided by purpose and audience will become a meaningless exercise of following a framework. Therefore, during our research, we attempted to link the teaching of informational texts to the reading material the children were using and to other curriculum areas. This was to make writing both purposeful and meaningful. Some teachers had
no trouble with this process, whilst others, who were finding the linking of subject areas a new experience, were having some degree of difficulty.

**Practices.** The action plan focussed on linking the different areas of language rather than teach reading, writing, speaking and listening as separate components. The ability of the participants to follow this plan, teaching language as a whole rather than fragmented parts, depended on their position on the continuum of learning. The continuum of learning can be explained in the following way. Learning is a life long process, a continuum. We all occupy different positions on this continuum depending on our knowledge and experience. In teaching, our knowledge and experiences are guided by the syllabuses we use. The recent *English Language K-7 Syllabus* (1989) and its predecessor, the *Primary English Syllabus with notes* (1978) focussed on teaching language as a whole, relating it to other curriculum areas. Teaching language as fragmented parts is a concept prior to 1978. Therefore, teachers like Greg, who use other curriculum areas to teach language, occupy a position further along the continuum than those who teach language in an unrelated manner. I believe this is the important factor in explaining why Greg was able to run with the action plan, whilst the other teachers had varying degrees of difficulty in implementing the different
action steps. Therefore, I conclude, these teachers' ability to adapt to a new idea about teaching writing, depended on the relationship of this idea to their position on the continuum of learning. Further explanation of the factors that influence the change of teaching practices is given by two flow charts in Appendix 8.

Another factor that plays an important role in change is the interest of the principal. In our research teams, we had two principals. One had encouraged his whole school to be involved in the research. The other had become so inspired by the strategies for teaching informational texts that he had inserviced his staff and then kept them informed of the various ideas we planned to put into action at each cycle meeting. The stimulation and interest of these principals was reflected by the success of the implementation of the strategies for teaching informational texts. However, one participant did not have the stimulation of a principal's enthusiasm for implementing this type of writing into the teaching programme. Without the principal's active support, it was difficult for this teacher to influence change in the teaching practices of other staff members in the area of writing. In this way, she lacked the support of her colleagues as she attempted to change the way she taught writing and found the process difficult without others on the staff with whom to share
her successes and failures. From these points, I conclude that the success of the implementation of new strategies for teaching informational text writing depended on the principal's knowledge about the text types and his enthusiasm for changing the practices for teaching writing in his school.

**Values.** All of the teachers valued participating in a group to improve their knowledge about informational texts and the teaching of them:

**Rhonda:** Being able to share ideas and report back to someone else is beneficial. "Teachers have such a wealth of knowledge and we very rarely get a chance to share it. This is a shame because there are so many untapped resources around. It is very useful to hear what other teachers have done because you are getting another idea, another point of view. And it is so useful to have someone like you, Beth, with knowledge to guide and lead you through, and to work out where to go to next. If I was trying to do this in my classroom, I would just be floundering because there is no one there to say, "OK, try it this way, then let me know how you got on". I think I would have just probably given up.

**Alison:** It's been one of the few times we have sat and talked about educational matters.

**Cris:** The beauty of this situation is that we all know and are familiar with the frameworks. If you go to another school there might be only one person using them. The students go to another class and there is no carry over. So they have only one year, and yet it takes five years to develop them.

**Sue:** It's handy having a specialist, like you, coming into the school. You slip us things you hear from the other people, [i.e., the Mixed School Team].
Maxine: I've seen a big improvement in my own teaching. The chance to share ideas, having input from outside the school and support ...

Greg: Yes. It's been tremendous for me. As I said my own knowledge has improved. I think I feel a lot more comfortable now that I know that there are other people that are in the same position as myself and that experts in the field ... I mean, just discussing with yourself and Rhonda and a few others it's obvious we are all in the same boat together and everyone was feeling a bit uncomfortable, I think.

Beth: Yes. We certainly all learn from each other. I have learnt so much working with you people. We all started really in the same boat, didn't we?

Greg: I felt much happier as a principal too because it is important to me. I'm supposed to be seen as the expert in inverted commas. 

Beth: (laughing) Like me.

Greg: (laughing) Yes. Quite often you are bluffing your way through and you are not quite comfortable yourself. But I feel a lot better now.

The action research, in which we had just participated, was a learning process for all. The knowledge we gained as teachers benefited our students by improving the teaching and writing of informational texts in our schools.
Prior to this study, the teachers who participated in the action research reported here, taught writing in an unstructured manner using the Process-Conference approach as outlined in the *Writing K-7 Teachers Notes* (1985). The little direction given in the syllabuses prior to the *English Language K-7 Syllabus* (1989), caused the teachers to rely on their "common sense" for guidance on what to teach in the area of writing. Also, these teachers mainly limited their writing instruction to writing lessons. Few used other curriculum areas to support their writing programme or utilised these areas to teach writing. Most teachers did not teach the writing of informational texts except for the occasional business letter, social letter or project writing.

The majority of teachers in this research desired more direction and structure to their writing programme. They stated that they had insufficient knowledge to be able to teach writing well, especially the informational texts required by the *English Language K-7 Syllabus* (1989). They, therefore, wished to participate in a group aimed at trying to learn more about informational texts and how to teach the writing of them.
Using the process of action research, these teachers discussed their concerns and agreed on a plan of action to change their practices in teaching writing, particularly of informational texts. The plan was monitored by the teachers keeping personal-professional journals, using pupil questionnaires or interviews, and analysing the students' writing guided by checklists. The results of this monitoring were shared at the second and third cycle meetings.

On the basis of the data presented, it is apparent the teachers encountered many problems in teaching the writing of informational texts as listed in the English Language K-7 Syllabus (1989). The one day workshop, on Strategies for Teaching Children How to Write Narrative and Informational Texts (Latham & Sloan, 1990), was not enough to effect change in the schools observed. In spite of being exposed to knowledge about the writing and teaching of these texts, the teachers needed several meetings with their colleagues and a specialist to assist them to implement effectively the appropriate strategies in their classrooms.

The teachers lack of prior knowledge of these text types, with their specific schematic structures and associated
language, was the major problem to overcome. This led to a further problem. The teachers were unable to recognise the occurrence and use of these texts in real life, e.g., in the daily newspaper. Without being able to do this, the writing of the text types, and, therefore, teaching children how to write them, had no purpose associated with empowering children to function more ably in society. It was necessary, therefore, to overcome this problem, otherwise the writing of the text types by children in schools would have become, as Rivalland (1989) cautioned, pointless teacher-directed exercises of following artificial frameworks and producing pieces of writing unrelated to real life purposes.

The teachers participating in this research project were able to overcome these two problems to varying degrees. The process of action research, involving regular planning and feedback sessions with colleagues and specialist support, enhanced the teachers’ knowledge of the text types and their occurrence in real life and of appropriate teaching strategies for improving children’s ability to write them. As discussed elsewhere in this research report, the degree of success enjoyed by the participants in teaching children how to write the text types was also a function of each teacher’s teaching style.
I believe that three aspects of the action research approach employed in this study were responsible for the degree of change of teaching practice that was observed. These three aspects were the formulation of a basic plan to show the teachers how to start, what to teach and how to link the teaching of writing to other curriculum areas; the holding of regular feedback/planning meetings; and the fact of mutual support among teachers and their school principal.

The basic plan gave the teachers direction in putting the ideas and strategies presented at the workshop into daily classroom practice. This plan, I believe, was the vital component in successfully changing teaching practice. Few of the participants followed it exactly. That is, all changed it to suit their teaching styles and their students' needs, but the step-by-step plan was required as a starting point from which to begin and the broad framework within which to proceed.

The regular meetings were held in a relaxed atmosphere, and involved the principals, the teachers and the specialist working as colleagues. Such meetings were needed to support the beginnings of change. It was essential that these meetings were friendly, relaxed and not heavily structured to facilitate and encourage the full involvement or
commitment of each participant. During these meetings, the expert and teachers worked collaboratively to research the process of change and effect solutions to the problems and concerns that arose.

Clearly changes in teaching practices are easier to make when the school principal and colleagues are involved in and are supportive of such changes. It is apparent from the research reported here that the teacher implementing change alone in her school had more problems than the others who were working with colleagues and a principal who were also involved in change.

In reviewing the project, the participants felt that changes in their teaching practice were successfully achieved because of the use of the action research model. As discussed above, the success occurred because of the three major aspects of the action research model. A further factor, inherent in the use of the action research model, is the fact that involvement in the project was a decision made by each participant. Thus, the change was not driven by some external variable but, rather, by a strong, intrinsic desire to learn about text types and how to teach them. This fact suggests that curriculum change is likely to be effective only where the teachers
themselves believe in and understand the need for the change.

The participating principals and teachers also believe that success was due, in significant measure, to the regular contact with a specialist in the field who was able to provide expert advice and to answer questions on content and teaching practice as they arose.

Further Implications
The findings of this research project have clear implications for an educational agency such as the WA Ministry of Education. These are:

1. Changes in school curriculums and the teaching practices for their implementation, are unlikely to be successful when imposed “from the top”. This means that a simple and effective information disseminating strategy must be found to keep teachers informed about advances being made in curriculum content and teaching practices so that they will see the advantages of changing their knowledge and instructional practices. The identification of such a means of persuasively disseminating information will be a formidable task.
2. Where teachers recognise and support the need for change, the provision of one-shot inservice courses, lasting for one or two days, will not be sufficient to effect change. Key specialists in each subject area, and for each geographical location, must be trained and assisted in moving about amongst the participants as individuals and as members of planning, reporting and supporting teams. Such specialists need to be well versed in recent trends in their area of specialisation and in the use of action research aimed at collaborative implementation of change.

It is a matter for some concern that the WA Ministry of Education's present approach to curriculum change and its implementation reinforces the occasional "one shot" inservice course with no school level follow-up or support. Perhaps the best hope for the future lies in the fact that responsibility for professional development and the funds to support it have been devolved to the individual school level. At least under these circumstances, decisions to change can arise at the school level and can be driven by the desire of the personnel of each school to improve their professional practice. The problem with this situation is that only the truly professional principals and teachers will make the significant effort needed to keep up-to-date.
**Hypotheses for Future Research**

The following hypotheses have arisen from observing the processes through which six teachers went in their efforts to improve the writing of informational texts in their classes. It is suggested that these hypotheses be tested using another method of research.

1. The amount of writing taught in a school is in proportion to how much the teachers value writing as a skill essential to success in a sophisticated society.

2. The greater the value placed on writing by teachers, the greater the value placed on writing by their students.

3. The more teachers believe that a change of teaching practice will benefit their children, the greater the likelihood that those teachers will change their current practice.

4. There is a significant, beneficial difference in change in teaching practice if colleagues are also involved than if colleagues are not involved in the implementation of the change.
5. Professional development using a step by step plan for the translation of the theory into practice, will have greater chance of success than professional development attempted without a clear plan.

6. The degree of success of the implementation of change is in proportion to the school principal’s enthusiasm for the change and his/her knowledge of the theory and practices involved in the change.

7. There is no relationship between the quality of teaching and the number of inservice courses in which the teacher has participated.

8. Children, who are taught editing by a teacher using properly structured lessons, become better at editing their own writing than children who are given rules and told to follow them.

9. The greater the teacher’s confidence in teaching a subject area or a new procedure or set of teaching strategies, the less the teacher will feel threatened by evaluation.
10. Teachers who have kept up to date with current teaching trends by professional reading, further studies and attending conferences, will have less difficulty changing their teaching practice than those who have not kept up to date.

It is hoped that the research reported here and these hypotheses which have been derived from it, make a contribution to the understanding of the processes through which teachers go as they implement change in their teaching practices, especially where these teaching practices are aimed at improving the writing of informational texts.
REFERENCES


Education Department of Western Australia (1936). The curriculum for primary schools. Perth: Author.


APPENDIX 1
FEATURES OF THE TEXT TYPES

The text types are widely used in society but rarely occur in the simplified, straightforward structure that will be introduced to primary school students. It is therefore important that the classroom teaching is supplemented by examples of these text types as they occur in society. (The newspaper is a good source to find examples of all the text types). If students are not shown these, they will not form the connection between what is taught in the classroom and how they will use these text types in life.

Text Types Are Distinguished By:
The Purpose for which they are written.
The Language used.
The Structure or framework followed.

To Classify The Text Types From A Newspaper:
Ask yourself:

1. **Why was it written?**
   - To retell actual events in order of time: **Recount**
   - To classify & describe: **Report**
   - To tell someone how to do/make something: **Procedure**
   - To tell how/why something works: **Explanation**
   - To argue: **Exposition**
   - To entertain: **Narrative**

2. **What language is used?**

   **Recount**:
   - dynamic (action verbs) - went, saw, made, etc.
   - discourse markers of time - yesterday, when, after, etc.
   - use of past tense - we went, they saw.
   - use of pronouns - we, our, it, etc.

   **Report**:
   - present tense (usually).
   - tendency to begin every sentence with subject noun - The Honey Bee.
   - relational verbs, e.g. is, used in classification paragraph. Attributional
     verbs, e.g. has, used in description paragraph. Action verbs, e.g.
     lives, collects, used in dynamics paragraph.
   - adverbs and adjectives used sparingly.

   **Procedure**:
   - generally first and final paragraphs are written using complete sentences.
   - the proper procedure is written in the imperative e.g. You sift flour.
   - discourse markers of time (first, then, when, etc.)
   - action verbs (put, mix, cut etc.)
   - detailed description (size, shape, amount etc.)
   - detailed information of how, where and when.

   **Explanation**:
   - usually about generalised non-human things.
   - discourse markers of time (first, then, following, finally etc.)
   - cause-and-effect relationships (if-then, as a consequence etc.)
   - mainly action verbs (changes, works, drives etc.)
   - timeless present tense (are, happens, turns etc.)

   **Exposition**:
   - mainly timeless present tense (can change to past tense when referring
     to a historical event or future tense for predictions)
   - connectives associated with reasoning (therefore, so, because, the first
     reason etc.)
   - often emotive words (we strongly believe)
   - assertive language

   **Narrative**:
   - characterisation.
   - mainly action words.
   - speech
   - normally past tense
   - dialogue in which tense may change to present or future.
   - descriptive language (adjectives, adverbs, similes & metaphors)
   - appeals to the imagination.
   - usually written in first or third person.

References:
3. **What is the Text Structure?**

Each text type has a specific structure:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RECOUNT</th>
<th>REPORT</th>
<th>PROCEDURE</th>
<th>EXPOSITION</th>
<th>EXPLANATION</th>
<th>NARRATIVE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SETTING</td>
<td>CLASSIFICATION</td>
<td>GOAL/AIM</td>
<td>THESIS</td>
<td>DEFINITION</td>
<td>SETTING</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who?</td>
<td>What is it?</td>
<td>What is to be done?</td>
<td>The statement of the problem or the point of view.</td>
<td>What is it?</td>
<td>Who</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Where?</td>
<td></td>
<td>REQUIREMENTS</td>
<td>ARGUMENTS/</td>
<td>COMPONENTS/PARTS Description of</td>
<td>When</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When?</td>
<td></td>
<td>What is needed to complete</td>
<td>PARTS</td>
<td>the parts.</td>
<td>Where</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Why?</td>
<td></td>
<td>this task?</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td></td>
<td>Why (optional)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EVENTS IN TIME ORDER (i.e. first to last)</td>
<td>PLACE/TIME Where, when is it? (time/place)</td>
<td>DYNAMICS What does it do?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>INITIATING EVENT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.,</td>
<td></td>
<td>STEPS</td>
<td>ARGUMENTS/</td>
<td>OPERATIONS How it works... cause</td>
<td>What began the action?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.,</td>
<td></td>
<td>SUMMARIZING COMMENT</td>
<td>ASSERTIONS</td>
<td>and effect...</td>
<td>How won the main character</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3., ... etc.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>The arguments for the point of view supported by data, references or comment.</td>
<td></td>
<td>involved?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONCLUDING</td>
<td></td>
<td>STEPS</td>
<td>SUMMARY/</td>
<td>APPLICATIONS When and where it</td>
<td>COMPLICATION</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STATEMENT/ENDING</td>
<td></td>
<td>First step to last step.</td>
<td>CONCLUSIONS</td>
<td>works or is applied.</td>
<td>How did the conflict or problem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>a) What is to be done?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>develop.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>b) How it is to be done?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>RESOLUTION or CODA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>EVALUATION/</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>How did the main character</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>TESTING</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>solve the problem?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(LATHAM & SLOAN, 1990)
APPENDIX 2

PUPIL QUESTIONNAIRE
INFORMATIONAL TEXT WRITING

*Please draw a circle around the answer you wish to give to each question. If you are not sure, circle the nearest to what you think.*

1. How much of the lesson did you enjoy?
   All of it / Some of it / None

2. Did you learn anything new?
   Nothing / A little / A fair amount / A lot

3. Did you understand what you were suppose to do?
   Fully / Sufficiently / Vaguely / Not at all

4. Were you able to follow the framework you were taught today?
   Easily / Had trouble with parts / Couldn't do it

5. If you had trouble, what caused it?
   
   
   

6. Did you need any help?
   None / A little / Some / A fair amount / A lot

7. Who gave you the help?
   
   
   


APPENDIX 2a

PUPIL QUESTIONNAIRE
INFORMATIONAL TEXT WRITING - REPORT

Please draw a circle around the answer you wish to give to each question. If you are not sure, circle the nearest to what you think.

1. How much of the lesson did you enjoy?
   All of it / Some of it / None

2. Did you learn anything new?
   Nothing / A little / A fair amount / A lot

3. Did you understand what you were suppose to do?
   Fully / Sufficiently / Vaguely / Not at all

4. Were you able to follow the framework you were taught today?
   Easily / Had trouble with parts / Couldn’t do it

5. If you had trouble, what caused it?
   Classification (What it is?) [ ] Dynamics (What does it do?) [ ]
   Description (What it looks like?) [ ] Summarising Comment [ ]
   Location (Where it is found?) [ ]

6. Did you need any help? None / A little / Some / A fair amount / A lot

7. Who gave you the help?
APPENDIX 2b

PUPIL QUESTIONNAIRE
INFORMATIONAL TEXT WRITING - RECOUNT

Please draw a circle around the answer you wish to give to each question. If you are not sure, circle the nearest to what you think.

1. How much of the lesson did you enjoy?
   - All of it / Some of it / None

2. Did you learn anything new?
   - Nothing / A little / A fair amount / A lot

3. Did you understand what you were suppose to do?
   - Fully / Sufficiently / Vaguely / Not at all

4. Were you able to follow the framework you were taught today?
   - Easily / Had trouble with parts / Couldn't do it

5. If you had trouble, what caused it?
   - Events in time order [ ] Concluding Statement / Ending [ ]

6. Did you need any help?
   - None / A little / Some / A fair amount / A lot

7. Who gave you the help?
Please draw a circle around the answer you wish to give to each question. If you are not sure, circle the nearest to what you think.

1. How much of the lesson did you enjoy?
   All of it / Some of it / None

2. Did you learn anything new?
   Nothing / A little / A fair amount / A lot

3. Did you understand what you were suppose to do?
   Fully / Sufficiently / Vaguely / Not at all

4. Were you able to follow the framework you were taught today?
   Easily / Had trouble with parts / Couldn't do it

5. If you had trouble, what caused it?
   Definition / Applications (When/where it works or is applied) / Description of Components/ Parts / Interesting Comment / Operations (How it works?)

6. Did you need any help? None / A little / Some / A fair amount / A lot

7. Who gave you the help?
APPENDIX 2c

PUPIL QUESTIONNAIRE
INFORMATIONAL TEXT WRITING - EXPOSITION

Please draw a circle around the answer you wish to give to each question. If you are not sure, circle the nearest to what you think.

1. How much of the lesson did you enjoy?
   All of it / Some of it / None

2. Did you learn anything new?
   Nothing / A little / A fair amount / A lot

3. Did you understand what you were suppose to do?
   Fully / Sufficiently / Vaguely / Not at all

4. Were you able to follow the framework you were taught today?
   Easily / Had trouble with parts / Couldn’t do it

5. If you had trouble, what caused it?
   Thesis [ ]
   Arguments / Assertions: For? [ ] Against? [ ] Supporting Data [ ]
   Conclusions [ ] Summary [ ]

6. Did you need any help? None / A little / Some / A fair amount / A lot

7. Who gave you the help?

---------------------------------------------------------------
APPENDIX 2e

PUPIL QUESTIONNAIRE
TEXT WRITING - NARRATIVE

Please draw a circle around the answer you wish to give to each question. If you are not sure, circle the nearest to what you think.

1. How much of the lesson did you enjoy?
   All of it / Some of it / None

2. Did you learn anything new?
   Nothing / A little / A fair amount / A lot

3. Did you understand what you were suppose to do?
   Fully / Sufficiently / Vaguely / Not at all

4. Were you able to follow the framework you were taught today?
   Easily / Had trouble with parts / Couldn't do it

5. If you had trouble, what caused it?
   Initiating Event [ ]
   Complication [ ] Resolution [ ]

6. Did you need any help?
   None / A little / Some / A fair amount / A lot

7. Who gave you the help?
APPENDIX 2F

PUPIL QUESTIONNAIRE
INFORMATIONAL TEXT WRITING - PROCEDURE

Please draw a circle around the answer you wish to give to each question. If you are not sure, circle the nearest to what you think.

1. How much of the lesson did you enjoy?
   All of it / Some of it / None

2. Did you learn anything new?
   Nothing / A little / A fair amount / A lot

3. Did you understand what you were suppose to do?
   Fully / Sufficiently / Vaguely / Not at all

4. Were you able to follow the framework you were taught today?
   Easily / Had trouble with parts / Couldn’t do it

5. If you had trouble, what caused it?
   Goal or Aim [ ]
   Requirements [ ]
   Method [ ] Evaluation [ ]

6. Did you need any help? None / A little / Some / A fair amount / A lot

7. Who gave you the help?
APPENDIX 3
# APPENDIX 3

**ANALYSIS OF TEXT TYPE CHOSEN**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students Name</th>
<th>Account</th>
<th>Procedure</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
<th>Report</th>
<th>Exposition</th>
<th>Narrative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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APPENDICES 3a-f
APPENDIX 3a
RECOUNT—

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students Names</th>
<th>Able to Present Events in Time</th>
<th>Separate Paragraphs</th>
<th>For Setting</th>
<th>Events</th>
<th>Ending</th>
<th>Observations</th>
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### APPENDIX 3b
#### PROCEDURE

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Students Names</th>
<th>Steps written in correct sequence</th>
<th>Goal or Aim</th>
<th>Requirements</th>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Evaluation</th>
<th>Teacher Observations</th>
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## APPENDIX 3c
### EXPLANATION

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<th>Students Names</th>
<th>Logical Analysis</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Description of Component or Parts</th>
<th>Operations</th>
<th>Applications</th>
<th>Teachers' Observations</th>
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### APPENDIX 3d REPORT

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<th>Students Names</th>
<th>Able to Locate &amp; Use Accurate Information</th>
<th>Classification</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Dynamics</th>
<th>Summarising Comment</th>
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### APPENDIX 3c

**EXPOSITION**

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<tr>
<th>Students Names</th>
<th>Able To Critically Evaluate</th>
<th>Thesis</th>
<th>Arguments/Assertions</th>
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### APPENDIX 3f
#### NARRATIVE

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<th>Students Names</th>
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<th>Initiating</th>
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LETTER TO FUTURE PARTICIPANTS OF INFORMATIONAL TEXT WRITING ACTION RESEARCH

Dear .................

During our recent phone conversation you expressed the desire to participate in our action research project to improve informational text writing in the Primary School.

The following points may help you to understand the process and commitment required.

Action Research fits in well with school development planning. It effects classroom practice by:

* utilising and developing the knowledge teachers have accumulated through experience;
* assisting teachers to use the process of research to improve classroom practice;
* focussing on the immediate interests and concerns of classroom teachers; and
* building on the "natural" processes of evaluation and research.

Teacher involvement will be:

* attending meetings after school to reflect on current practice and plan future action (these meetings will be for no longer than an hour and occur monthly or as arranged by the participants).
* obtain data through classroom observations, interviewing students, collecting and analysing work samples.

Involvement by me will be:

* facilitate at these meetings, guiding teachers to become researchers into their own practices;
* analyse data collected; and writing up the research.

To facilitate notetaking, the meetings will be tape recorded. The transcripts of these recordings will be shown to the participants for confirmation and, if needed,
reviewing and editing. Only matters approved by you will be included in the research project.

In the project you are learning to be researchers in your own classes. For comparison at the end of the cycles of action you will need to collect samples of work now. We are aiming at this point to establish whether children can freely choose the correct text type for a specific purpose. Therefore it is important not to contaminate your research by any hints, motivation, guidelines etc.

**DO:** Ask children to choose an animal, then write about it telling as much as they can about the animal they have chosen.

At the beginning of the research it is important also to examine yourself as a teacher. This will form the basis of our action of self-improvement.

It is a good idea to write the answers to these questions as it will be a record of yourself at the commencement of the action research.

**DO:** With regards to our action research project on the "Improvement of Writing Informational Text Type namely recount, report, procedure, explanation and exposition:

1. Why is this area of enquiry important to you?
2. Why do you think it is important to your students?
3. What is happening in your class in this area at the moment?
4. What do you want to change?
5. Why do you want to change this?

If you have any problems, please contact me at the District Education Office, phone ........

The date of our first meeting will be , at to pm. During this time we will share our
concerns and work out an action plan. On implementation, this plan will be monitored by you and data collected. The information obtained from this data will influence our next plan of action.

Looking forward to seeing you at our first meeting.

Many thanks for your co-operation.

BETH BERRIDGE
SCHOOL DEVELOPMENT OFFICER
(LANGUAGE AND FIRST STEPS)
TELEPHONE INTERVIEW

This interview was conducted prior to the Workshop on "Strategies for Teaching Children How to Write Narrative and Informational Texts".

1. How many children in your school?

2. What is the socio economic background of these children?

3. Do you believe the parents of these children value literacy and would support the implementation of new ideas for the teaching of writing?

4. Do you think it is important for the parents to be involved in the writing programme?

5. Do you think it is important for the children to have a-say in what they are taught?

6. How do you feel about your current writing programme in relation to informational and narrative text writing?

7. Do you have any problems with your current writing programme?

8. How do you presently go about handling these problems?

9. Do the children value the writing programme?

10. Do you ever ask the children what they feel about the writing programme?
THE LANGUAGE SPHERE IN RELATION TO COMPOSING: QUESTIONS THE WRITER/SPEAKER NEEDS TO CONSIDER

by Beth Berridge, Albany District Education Office, 1991 ©

PRIOR TO WRITING/SPEAKING:

Who is it for?  
(AUDIENCE)

What level of understanding is my audience at?  
(LANGUAGE CONCEPTS)

Why am I composing it?  
(PURPOSE)

What text type is appropriate?  
(FORMS OF TEXT)

What background knowledge do I need?  
(BACKGROUND)

What framework does this type of text follow?  
(TEXT CONVENTIONS)

What will go in it?  
(CONTENT)

What special language is used?  
(TEXT CONVENTIONS)

AFTER WRITING/SPEAKING - MONITORING

On re-reading my composition... have I chosen the most suitable text for the purpose and audience?  

Is the grammar suited to the text type?  

Have I chosen the content wisely?  

Are there errors in spelling or punctuation?  

Can I improve the text by re-organising the sentences?  

Is my writing legible & attractive?  
(HANDWRITING)

Can I improve sentences by re-organising the words?  

What does another person think of my composition?  

ACTION RESEARCH MEETING 22-8-91

1. How have you found the free approach of choosing the text types according to need?

2. Were you able to introduce the text types by problem solving an example?

3. How did you manage to link the text types to audience and purpose?

4. Did your students practise the text type orally before writing?
   How did you do this?
   Did you find it of value?

5. Has this approach helped your lessons to have a clear purpose, structure and focus for evaluation?

6. Have you seen any evidence of improvement in the children’s writing?

7. Has the structure improved?

8. Are the students able to see that these texts exist in life?

9. What have you done to help them to see this?

10. Is there any value of working as a whole staff using the action research model to improve writing?
    Why?

11. What are your future plans with regard to the teaching of writing?
MODEL SHOWING PROBLEMS RELATED TO TEACHING INFORMATIONAL TEXTS

L. BERRIDGE 1991

Syllabuses and Curriculums that guided the teachers that taught this generation of teachers.

Conceptual level of Teachers

Syllabus Focused on:

- 1936 Basic Skills
- 1954 Mastery of Rules of Grammar
- 1969 Free writing
- 1978 Child centred

PROBLEM

- No structure given to guide the teaching of Information Text Writing

PROBLEM

- Haphazard approach to the teaching of writing - depends on teachers' personal knowledge and ability to teach writing.

PROBLEM

- If above is inadequate then breakdown in the flow of knowledge passed on to next generation.

PROBLEM

- Lack of knowledge of writing inhibits ability to interpret new ideas and strategies.

1985 Writing K-7 Teacher's Notes focusing on Process

1989 English K-7 Syllabus introduces Information text writing.
FLOWCHART TO EXPLAIN FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE THE CHANGE OF TEACHING PRACTICES

L BERRIDGE 1991

Conceptual level of teachers

What teachers teach depends on what they know

What teachers know governs how well they understand, adopt and implement new ideas.

Teacher Application

ie. strategies, teaching methods, etc.

Teachers’ own education at primary and secondary school

Further studies:

Inservices
Further education
Professional reading
Tertiary studies etc.

Grave’s Process Writing

Cambourne’s Model of Learning

Derewianka, Latham & Sloan - Informational Text Features

Riverland - Real Purpose - Real Audience

Texts & Reference Books

Teachers Notes & Guidelines (Ministry of Education & Commercial)