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**MASTERS THESIS**

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**TOWARDS A SYSTEMATIC FRAMEWORK FOR EXAMINING THE  
CONGRUENCE AMONG READING OBJECTIVES, TASKS, AND  
COMPETENCIES IN BOTSWANA'S PRIMARY SCHOOLS.**

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## List of Acronyms

AIDS	Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
EFA	Education For All
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
IEA	International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement
IIEP	International Institute for Educational Planning
NRC	National Research Coordinators
RNPE	Revised National Policy on Education
SACMEQ	Southern and Eastern African Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality
TIMSS	Trends in International Mathematics and Science Studies
UNESCO	United Nation Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

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## **Abstract**

This thesis undertakes a detailed examination of the reading skills of Botswana 's Grade 6 pupils and then uses the results of this examination to reflect upon the content and structure of the curriculum and teaching materials provided for these children. The research was centred around the construction of a Reading Skills Hierarchy for Botswana's Grade 6 pupils that provides a descriptive account of their reading competencies by illustrating exactly "what they can and can not do".

The findings of this thesis indicate a need to review and rethink the kinds of teaching activities and curriculum materials provided for Botswana's Grade 6 pupils in order to bring them in line with the reading performances that are expected of them in classrooms. There are two main issues at hand. The first is the responsibility of the Ministry of Education to ensure that the teaching activities and curriculum materials provide educational experiences for pupils that fully satisfy the Ministry's official specific reading objectives. The second is that there appears to be a number of "gaps" between the actual reading tasks given to pupils and the importance of providing an opportunity for pupils to be challenged by "higher order" reading skills.

Finally, the thesis proposes an agenda for action by the Botswana Ministry of Education in an effort to improve the reading achievement levels of Botswana's Grade 6 pupils. This agenda was prepared in order to stimulate a systematic national debate on what action the Ministry of Education needs to take in order to improve reading achievement levels in primary schools. The agenda also suggests examples of how curriculum experts might begin the challenge of raising the complexity of reading tasks to bring them more into alignment with the Ministry's own official reading objectives.

# CHAPTER 1:

## Introduction

### Some Background Information About Botswana

Botswana is a land-locked country with a surface area of 581,730 square kilometers, and is situated in the southern part of Africa. It is bordered by South Africa, Namibia, Zambia and Zimbabwe. The Kgalagadi Desert covers about 84 percent of the surface area of Botswana. A majority of the population of Botswana live in the Eastern and South Eastern parts. The physical environment of dry and poor soils accounts for the varied population distribution.

Botswana is relatively flat, with gentle undulations and occasional rocky outcrops. It has low rainfall and high temperatures. The mean monthly maximum temperatures range between 23 degrees to 25 degrees in the northern parts and 21 degrees to 23 degrees in the southern parts. The lowest mean temperatures vary between 1 degree to 5 degrees in the eastern parts and 5 degrees to 7 degrees in the northern parts.

According to the Population Projection report (Central Statistics Office, 2005c) Botswana had a total estimated population of 1.85 million in 2006. The annual average growth rate was estimated to be 2.4 percent per annum. Botswana has a young population age structure. The population below 15 years of age was estimated at 36.7 percent for 2006. Life expectancy at birth in Botswana is currently estimated at 55.6 years. The majority of the population resides in rural areas, estimated at 53 percent in 2006. On the basis of the results of the Botswana AIDS Impact Survey report, Botswana is among the countries with high adult HIV prevalence rates, estimated at 17.2 percent in 2004 (Central Statistics Office, 2005a).

Botswana attained Independence in 1966. At that time Botswana was one of the world's poorest countries (with a per capita income of about US\$80) and relied heavily on agriculture and foreign aid. The production of beef was the main driving force for the economy. Foreign aid was mainly used for investment projects and financing recurrent expenditure. After Independence the country started experiencing a remarkable social and economic transformation which emerged from the discovery and production of minerals. The Per Capita Gross Domestic Product at constant market prices increased from P908.6 in 1966 to P22,742.2 in 2004. Currently mineral revenues account for over 50 percent of total government revenues (Central Statistics Office, 2005d).

The rapid economic growth experienced after Independence resulted in a major expansion of the financial sector. The Central Bank was established in 1975 and the national currency was introduced in 1976. Several other financial institutions, including commercial banks and non bank financial institutions, were established during the 1970s. These institutions played a vital role in providing funds for investment. The Botswana Stock Exchange was established in 1989 and has grown rapidly in size since. During the 1990s there was also a considerable expansion of the range of banking outlets across the country.

Botswana has enjoyed political stability since Independence in 1966. It has a National Assembly with members elected directly from the constituencies, and a President who is the head of the executive arm of the government (the presidential candidate of the party with a majority of directly elected members of parliament). There are five main political parties and elections are held every four years.

## The People of Botswana

The earliest modern inhabitants of Botswana were the Bushman (San) and the Hottentot (Khoe) peoples. They have lived an almost unchanged lifestyle in the country since the Middle Stone Age. Both speak "click" (sesarwa) languages, though there are major differences between them. Both hunted and collected wild fruits and neither grew crops or reared animals.

Most of the tribes or groups of people in Botswana broke off from their parent tribes and moved to new land, creating new tribes and absorbing or subjugating the people they found there. People in the Eastern part of Botswana came from the Great Zimbabwe Empire. The other groups including the Bakgalagadi, the Batswana, and the Basotho came from Transvaal. These groups spoke dialects of the same language and shared many cultural affinities

Further movements and split-ups of the Batswana resulted in the major Tswana tribes which exist today: Bakhurutshe, Bangwato, Bakwena, Bangwaketse, Bakgatla, Batlhokwa, Barolong, Batlhaping and, much later, the Batawana. The earlier farming inhabitants of Botswana - the Bakgalagadi - also split into several groups, namely the Bakgwateng, Babolaongwe, Bangologa, Baphaleng, Bashaga, and many smaller groups.

A majority of the groups of people have adopted the culture of the Batswana. This is particularly evident with regard to cattle ownership. Cattle, the traditional Tswana source of wealth and status, are now desired by most, if not all groups of people in Botswana. Batswana culture was characterized by obvious physical aspects such as traditional clothing, arts and crafts, most ritual ceremonies and some tools and utensils of the different cultures. All these are slowly disappearing as more and more groups adopt Western culture. Life in the urban areas has been most affected by increasing "modernity". In the rural areas many traditions persist and ways of

life differ from region to region. Others remain important, however, such as cattle ownership, music and dance, and the consultation of traditional healers. These modern changes, which came so rapidly to Botswana, have had their advantages, and disadvantages, and the magnitude of the impact has varied from group to group. As a result of some of the changes, better health and education facilities have been provided and increased prosperity has improved the standard of living for most groups.

### **Botswana Education System**

The first primary and secondary schools that existed before Botswana attained independence in 1966 were owned and run by churches. These schools were financed by mission organizations. Later on, schools owned by tribes (merafe) and managed by Tribal School Committees came into being. Parents paid for the education of their children.

When Botswana became independent in 1966, it had a very underdeveloped education system. There were 251 primary schools, nine secondary schools and two teacher training colleges for primary education. Only about 20 percent of all primary school age children were enrolled, and the transition to secondary school was about eight percent. There were no post-secondary facilities. The initial emphasis of educational planning was on expanding the secondary sector and developing tertiary education in order to meet the human resource demands of the public service and formal sector. In 1977 the emphasis shifted to the goal of universal access to nine years of basic education, as a result of the report of the first National Commission on Education (Ministry of Education, 1977a). Parents continued to pay for the education of their children.

Since Independence there has been remarkable progress in ensuring that adequate educational facilities are made available to the entire population and this was

supported by the rapid economic growth experienced during the same period. According to the Education Statistics report of 2005, by 1986, the proportion of the primary school age population enrolled has increased to about 90 percent. Ten years later the figure was estimated to be over 96 percent (Central Statistics Office, 2005b). A number of efforts have also been made since 1977, to improve the quality of education through: curriculum development and instructional reform, strategies to improve administration and supervision through staff training, and recruitment of qualified personnel. The main aim of the National Curriculum was, and still is, to equip students with the basic skills and knowledge required after termination of formal education, with an emphasis placed on the practical aspects of subjects so as to prepare students for future careers.

The first education policy was established in 1977 as a result of the recommendations of the first National Commission on Education carried out in 1976 (Ministry of Education, 1977a). A particular emphasis of this policy was on universal basic education. The policy was later revised in 1994 as a result of recommendations from the second National Commission on Education in 1992 (Ministry Education, 1994a).

The Revised National Policy on Education (RNPE), which was established in 1994 (Ministry of Education, 1994b), emphasized the need to improve access to education at the primary level, as well as ensuring that children receive quality education, which is relevant to them and their communities. One of the most important goals in primary education was to develop basic skills including literacy, numeracy, and life skills among learners. Some of the strategies related to this policy were: reduction of primary school class sizes from 45 to 30, upgrading the training of primary school teachers from certificate to diploma level, and the introduction of English as a medium of instruction at Grade 2 level.

Based on the goals of the RNPE, a National Council on Education was established in order to oversee the implementation, as well as the monitoring and evaluation, of the quality of education that pupils were receiving. It has been against this background that Botswana has continued to participate in a number of international research studies including those conducted by the Southern and Eastern African Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality (SACMEQ) and the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Studies (TIMSS), in order to regularly assess and monitor the quality of education that the pupils are receiving. In these studies, the proportion of learners who have achieved the desired mastery level on the learning objectives as well as the level of reading literacy has been established.

### **This Research Study**

A number of educational reforms have shaped the development of Botswana's education system. These have included decentralizing some of the management responsibilities and pedagogical support services to the regions and schools, and giving increased autonomy to schools and regions as well as increasing the participation of the community and parents in the education of their children. There is now a need for the management of education to take stock of the impact of changes in the provision and quality of education. Some of the major concerns in the development of the education system include regional disparities in terms of inputs to schools, equity in the distribution of resources, and the quality of the education received by pupils.

The aim of the current study is to undertake a detailed examination of the reading skills of Botswana's Grade 6 pupils and then to use the results of this research to reflect upon the content and structure of the curriculum and teaching materials provided for these children. This research will be undertaken in two phases. First, there will be an analysis of those reading skills that have been acquired by Botswana's Grade 6 pupils and the reading skills that they are yet to acquire. This

will be followed by (a) an analysis of the Ministry of Education's official reading objectives for these pupils, and (b) an analysis of the type of reading materials and tasks are provided for Grade 6 pupils. Finally, some concrete proposals will be provided that suggest what steps the Botswana Ministry of Education should take in order to improve the reading skills of Grade 6 pupils.

The study will employ data from the SACMEQ II Project, and also use curriculum, syllabus, and reading materials used for Grade 6 pupils in Botswana.

The SACMEQ II Project represents the second cross-national study of the quality of education that has been conducted by the 15 countries that together comprise the Southern and Eastern African Consortium for Monitoring Education Quality (SACMEQ). A description of this project and data that were collected has been presented in the following chapter of this thesis.

### **The Structure of the Thesis**

The thesis has been presented as nine chapters as follows:

- **Chapter 1:** Introduction
- **Chapter 2:** The Design of this Study
- **Chapter 3:** Previous Research on Reading in Botswana
- **Chapter 4:** The Construction of the SACMEQ Reading Test: What Reading Domains and What Reading Competencies were Assessed?
- **Chapter 5:** The Reading Achievement of Botswana's Grade 6 Pupils: How Does it Compare with the Performance of Grade 6 Pupils in the other SACMEQ Countries?
- **Chapter 6:** The Reading Competencies of Botswana's Grade 6 Pupils: What does the SACMEQ Research Show us about "The Skills They Have Acquired" and "The Skills They Need To Acquire"?



- **Chapter 7:** The Teaching of Reading in Botswana: Are the Reading Skill Requirements of Botswana's Grade 6 Pupils Being Addressed by the Current Curriculum, Teaching Approaches, and Teaching Materials?
- **Chapter 8:** An Agenda for Action: What Concrete Steps can Botswana's Ministry of Education take to Improve Pupil Reading Skills?
- **Chapter 9:** Conclusion

## CHAPTER 2:

### The Design of the Study

#### Introduction

This chapter has provided a description of the importance of the research study and how the study will be carried out as well as the sources of data. It has commenced with a discussion of the main challenges facing the education system, the existing gaps in terms of research, and the justification for the study. This has been followed by the formulation of the research problem, the key steps in the research process, and the sources of data.

#### The Challenge

The most important academic challenge for the world's school systems is to ensure that all children are taught how to read at the highest possible level. However, there are still millions of children in the world who can not read. According to the EFA Global Monitoring Report 2005 (UNESCO, 2004) a substantial number of children have not mastered basic reading skills in many countries - especially where school systems are weak in terms of available school resources.

The widespread problems with pupil reading levels may be illustrated with reference to research results provided by the SACMEQ II Project. This research study assessed the reading performance of pupils in several ways. One of these was to classify pupils as to whether they were (a) above or below a "minimum reading level" (that is, just able to survive at the next level of schooling), and (b) above or below a "desirable reading level" (that is, likely to do well at the next level of schooling).

The percentages and sampling errors of pupils reaching minimum and desirable reading levels of mastery for each SACMEQ country have been presented in Table 2.1. The percentage of Grade 6 pupils reaching minimum reading level of mastery

ranges from a low of 8.6 percent in Malawi to a high of 70.9 percent in Seychelles, while the percentage of Grade 6 pupils reaching desirable reading level of mastery range from a low of 0.3 percent in Malawi to a high of 42.8 percent in Seychelles.

The SACMEQ countries can be placed into three broad performance groups in terms of the percentage of Grade 6 pupils that have reached the minimum mastery level in reading. The first group of five countries has more than 60 percent of Grade 6 pupils reaching minimum reading level: Seychelles (70.9 percent), Kenya (68.4 percent), Tanzania (67.9 percent), Swaziland (64.0 percent), and Mozambique (62.0 percent). The second group of two countries has close to 50 percent of Grade 6 pupils reaching minimum reading level: Botswana (55.8 percent) and Mauritius (55.8 percent). The third group of seven countries has less than 40 percent Grade 6 pupils reaching minimum reading level: Zanzibar (37.0 percent), South Africa (36.7 percent), Uganda (35.4 percent), Zambia (20.8 percent), Namibia (18.0 percent), Lesotho (16.2 percent), and Malawi (8.6 percent).

These results confirmed that in Southern and Eastern African countries there was a substantial number of children who did not reach what expect educators describe as “a minimum level of reading competence”. In particular, for Botswana, the SACMEQ research results have indicated that only a little over one half (56 percent) of Grade 6 pupils have reached a minimum level of reading, and that less than one fifth (16 percent) of Grade 6 pupils have reached a desirable level of reading.

**Table 2.1: Percentages and sampling errors of pupils reaching minimum and desirable reading levels of mastery by SACMEQ countries (SACMEQ II)**

Country	Pupils Reaching Minimum Level of Mastery		Pupils Reaching Desirable Level of Mastery	
	%	SE	%	SE
Seychelles	70.9	1.16	42.8	1.25
Kenya	68.4	2.18	23.3	2.06
Tanzania	67.9	2.24	27.1	2.14
Swaziland	64.0	2.19	11.7	1.39
Mozambique	62.0	1.63	7.8	0.81
Mauritius	55.8	1.97	29.5	1.83
Botswana	55.8	1.45	15.7	1.22
Zanzibar	37.0	1.06	3.2	0.43
South Africa	36.7	3.14	19.1	3.24
Uganda	35.4	2.79	10.0	1.76
Zambia	20.8	2.00	5.0	0.87
Namibia	18.0	1.22	7.0	0.90
Lesotho	16.2	1.46	2.0	0.49
Malawi	8.6	0.95	0.3	0.12

**Source: SACMEQ II Data Archive**

### **Responding to the Challenge**

The strategies used to teach children how to read can vary a great deal – both between countries and sometimes within countries. These may include approaches such as: working systematically through commercially-produced sets of readers for each grade, using a varied and rich children’s literature, providing engaging reading activities, and/or concentrating on regular workbook exercises. It is very important to recognize here that a pupil’s performance in reading can be strongly influenced by: the type of reading material provided in classrooms, and the reading tasks that are expected of the child.

The Type of Reading Material provided to pupils in classrooms may be grouped into three main categories: “narrative”, “expository”, and “documents”. Narrative reading material refers to a continuous texts in which the writer aims to tell a story –

whether this be fact or fiction. Expository reading material refers to a continuous text in which the writer aims to describe, explain, or otherwise convey factual information or opinion to the reader. Documents refer to structured information organized by the writer in a manner that requires the reader to search, locate, and process selected facts, rather than to read every word of a continuous text.

The Reading Tasks provided to pupils in classrooms may be quite different and can present different levels of complexity for pupils. For example, a reading task could be relatively simple such as retrieving information - which requires pupils to locate word(s) in a short text or to match word(s) to pictures. On the other hand the reading task could be quite complex such as interpreting implicit meaning - which requires pupils to locate and process pieces of information from various parts of a longer text so as to infer and evaluate the author's assumptions and purposes.

In many school systems the problem of poor reading performance among pupils is rarely addressed because researchers are often not able to communicate to teachers exactly "where" and "why" pupils are having reading difficulties. In these situations there is a need to provide clear descriptions of what pupils can do and what they need to be able to do in order to move to a higher level of reading competence. To address this there is need for researchers to explain the implications of reading test results in a fashion that provides concrete evidence for selecting appropriate classroom teaching strategies and other related pedagogical support services so that teachers are better able to take corrective action.

### **Rationale for the Study**

Reading literacy is universally viewed as a basic requirement for an individual to function in every day life and is a fundamental human right. This strong level of

agreement is not shown by educators when they are asked about their views on “the best methods for teaching children to read”. Controversy in this area has often been fueled by the major problem that many teachers adopt teaching practices (such as teaching for comprehension, enhancing vocabulary, and assessment, etc.) without being fully aware of the actual reading skills that the pupils have acquired and need to acquire.

The SACMEQ research project in Southern and Eastern Africa has conducted several studies for monitoring and assessing the quality of education received by pupils. These studies have included reading tests for pupils that were used to generate information on pupil reading competencies, but little attention was given to using this information to suggest instructional strategies that were relevant for each level of competence. This gap between “problem diagnosis” and “remedial treatment” still exists.

The SACMEQ research commenced by generating information on the reading skills of Grade 6 pupils through the use of a reading test based on the curriculum used in the participating countries. The SACMEQ Research Coordinators then carried out a “skills” audit that provided descriptions of the reading skills levels that Grade 6 pupils had acquired, but stopped short of specifying what classroom teaching strategies should be used to teach children how Grade 6 pupils might move to higher levels of reading skills.

### **Formulation of the Research Problem**

The SACMEQ II research results have indicated clearly that a substantial number of pupils in Botswana do not have reading skills required to correctly answer test questions at higher levels of reading competence. The results provide a mechanism for describing the reading performance of pupils in the form of a reading skill hierarchy that shows explicitly what Grade 6 pupils can and can not do. For

Botswana, there is now need to connect this information more clearly with the teaching-learning process. In general terms, this implies further analysis of information that will answer important questions:

- (a) What percentages of Grade six pupils are located at each of the reading skill levels defined by the SACMEQ II reading test?
- (b) What reading materials and tasks are being provided by Botswana's schools to Grade 6 pupils?
- (c) What are the expected reading performance levels of Grade 6 pupils set down in official curriculum and teacher handbooks?
- (d) Can we draw upon a linkage of the answers to (a), (b), and (c) in order to better inform teaching-learning processes and thereby improve the reading levels of Botswana's Grade 6 pupils?

It is expected that research into these questions will provide more insight for analysis of the nature and impact of teaching materials and practices in Botswana's primary schools. This analysis will provide opportunities for the development of some evidence-based proposals for improving reading achievement levels.

### **Key steps in the Research Process**

There were four key steps in the research described in this thesis:

- (a) Undertake a "skills audit" of the reading skills of Botswana's Grade 6 pupils (based on a detailed examination of their performance on the SACMEQ II pupils reading literacy test).
- (b) Employ the skills audit to prepare a descriptive analysis of the levels of reading competence that have been acquired by Botswana Grade 6 pupils.
- (c) Use this descriptive analysis as a general framework for evaluating official objectives set down by the Ministry of Education for the Grade 6 reading

curriculum, teaching approaches, and official curriculum and teacher handbook guidelines.

(d) Apply the results of this evaluation to the task of preparing evidence-based proposals for improving the reading achievement levels of Botswana's Grade 6 pupils.

It is expected that the findings of the study will provide a well argued agenda for national debate on what action the Botswana Ministry of Education needs to take in order to improve reading achievement levels at Grade 6 level in primary schools. The debate should provide substantial inputs to the area of textbook development, pre-service training of teachers, and specifications of classroom teaching strategies.

### **The Source of Data for the Study**

The study used data on Botswana Grade 6 pupils from the SACMEQ II project. The SACMEQ II project was a policy research study that was aimed at generating information that can be used by decision-makers to plan improvements in their education systems. The study was a collaboration between the International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP) and Ministries of Education in Southern and Eastern African Countries. Fourteen Ministries of Education participated in SACMEQ II project: Botswana, Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Seychelles, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania (Mainland), Tanzania (Zanzibar), Uganda, and Zambia.

The SACMEQ II study was conducted during the period 2000 - 2002. The desired target population for participating countries was defined as *"All pupils at Grade 6 level (at the first week of the eighth month of the school year) who were attending registered mainstream primary schools*. The desired target population definition for SACMEQ II Project was based on a grade-based description (and not an age-based



description) of pupils. This decision was taken because an age-based description (for example, a definition focused on “12 year-old pupils”) may have required the collection of data across many grade levels due to the high incidence of “late starters” and grade repetition.

On the basis of the definition of the desired target population, special schools for the handicapped were excluded from the SACMEQ II data collection. In addition, a decision was taken to exclude small schools (having less than 15 pupils in the desired target population).

The numbers of schools and pupils in the desired, defined and excluded populations for Botswana regions have been presented in Table 2.2. The corresponding figures for all countries that participated in the SACMEQ II Project have been presented in Table 2.3.

The final column of figures in Table 2.3 summarized the percentage of the SACMEQ II pupils in each country that had been excluded in order to form the defined target population. In all cases the percentages excluded were less than 5 percent - which satisfied the technical requirements that had been set down for the SACMEQ sampling procedures.

**Table 2.2: The desired, defined and excluded of Grade 6 population for Botswana.**

Stratum (Region)	Desired		Defined			Excluded		
	Schools	Pupils	Schools	Pupils	Schools	Pupils		
	No.	No.	No.	No.	%	No.	%	
North	70	3865	56	3770	14	20%	95	2%
Central N.	102	6247	85	6035	17	17%	212	3%
Central S.	145	8714	130	8585	15	10%	129	1%
S. Central	137	8540	115	8211	22	16%	329	4%
Southern	153	6611	112	6018	41	27%	593	9%
West	74	3731	55	3565	19	26%	166	4%
Gaborone	39	3700	36	3589	3	8%	111	3%
<b>Botswana</b>	<b>720</b>	<b>41408</b>	<b>589</b>	<b>39773</b>	<b>131</b>	<b>18%</b>	<b>1635</b>	<b>4%</b>

Source: SACMEQ II Data Archive

**Table 2.3: The desired, defined and excluded of Grade 6 population for the SACMEQ II project.**

Country	Desired		Defined		Excluded			
	Schools	Pupils	Schools	Pupils	Schools	Pupils		
	No.	No.	No.	No.	No.	%	No.	%
Botswana	720	41408	589	39773	131	18%	1635	4%
Kenya	15439	631544	13313	607900	2126	14%	23644	4%
Lesotho	1170	40493	947	39212	223	19%	1281	3%
Malawi	3663	219945	3368	212046	295	8%	7899	4%
Mauritius	277	26510	274	26481	3	1%	29	0%
Mozambique	509	112279	500	112173	9	2%	106	0%
Namibia	849	48567	767	47683	82	10%	884	2%
Seychelles	25	1577	24	1571	1	4%	6	0%
South Africa	17073	962350	11997	920020	5076	30%	42330	4%
Swaziland	498	19940	458	19541	40	8%	399	2%
Tanzania (Mainland)	10786	529296	9516	511354	1270	12%	17942	3%
Tanzania (Zanzibar)	161	22179	151	22041	10	6%	138	1%
Uganda	9688	517861	8425	499127	1263	13%	18734	4%
Zambia	3858	180584	3090	176336	768	20%	4248	2%
<b>SACMEQ-II</b>	<b>64716</b>	<b>3354533</b>	<b>53419</b>	<b>3235258</b>	<b>11297</b>	<b>17%</b>	<b>119275</b>	<b>4%</b>

Source: SACMEQ II Data Archive

The defined target population definition was used to guide the construction of sampling frames from which the samples of schools were selected. The sampling frames were based on national lists of schools that included information about: school identification numbers, enrolment for the target population of Grade 6 pupils, and school regional location. The information used to construct the sampling frames was based on data that had been collected by the SACMEQ Ministries of Education for the most recent School Census

The SACMEQ II samples for all participating countries were selected using a two-stage sampling procedure in which the first stage of sampling consisted of the PPS selection of schools followed by the selection of a simple random sample of pupils in selected schools. The resulting planned and achieved sample for Botswana regions and SACMEQ II project have been presented in Table 2.4 and Table 2.5, respectively. The final columns in Table 2.4 and Table 2.5 summarised the response rates.

**Table 2.4: The planned sample, achieved sample and response rates of schools and pupils for Botswana.**

Region	Planned		Achieved		Response rate	
	Schools	Pupils	Schools	Pupils	Schools	Pupils
Central North	25	400	20	394	80%	99%
Central South	30	500	25	493	83%	99%
Gaborone	20	600	30	583	150%	97%
North	20	600	30	594	150%	99%
South Central	30	500	25	484	83%	97%
South	25	400	20	383	80%	96%
West	20	400	20	391	100%	98%
<b>Botswana</b>	<b>170</b>	<b>3400</b>	<b>170</b>	<b>3322</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>98%</b>

**Source: SACMEQ II Data Archive**

**Table 2.5: The planned, achieved sample and response rates of schools and pupils for the SACMEQ II project.**

School System	Planned		Achieved		Response Rate	
	Schools	Pupils	Schools	Pupils	Schools	Pupils
Botswana	170	3400	170	3322	100%	98%
Kenya	185	3700	185	3299	100%	89%
Lesotho	180	3600	177	3155	98%	88%
Malawi	140	2800	140	2333	100%	83%
Mauritius	159	3180	159	2945	100%	93%
Mozambique	179	3580	176	3177	98%	89%
Namibia	275	5500	275	5048	100%	92%
Seychelles	24	1546	24	1484	100%	96%
South Africa	185	3700	169	3163	91%	85%
Swaziland	170	3400	168	3139	99%	92%
Tanzania (Mainland)	185	3700	181	2854	98%	77%
Tanzania (Zanzibar)	145	2900	145	2514	100%	87%
Uganda	164	3280	163	2642	99%	81%
Zambia	175	3500	173	2611	99%	75%
<b>SACMEQ II</b>	<b>2336</b>	<b>47786</b>	<b>2305</b>	<b>41686</b>	<b>99%</b>	<b>87%</b>

**Source: SACMEQ II Data Archive**

The SACMEQ II project collected information on:

- Pupils' characteristics and their learning environments: for example, age, gender, home background characteristics (parent education, regularity of meals), and access to classroom materials (textbooks, readers, and stationery).
- Teachers' characteristics and their viewpoints on teaching, classroom resources, professional support, and job satisfaction: for example, age, gender, socio-economic level, and the condition of their housing, teaching approaches/strategies (questioning, whole class teaching), assessment procedures, availability of classroom furniture (sitting/writing places, teacher table, teacher chair, and bookshelves) and classroom equipment (chalkboard, dictionary, maps, book corner, and teacher guides).

- School heads' characteristics and their viewpoints on educational infrastructure, the organization and operation of schools, and problems with pupils and staff: for example, age, gender, professional training, viewpoints on general school infrastructure (electrical and other equipment, water, and basic sanitation) and the condition of school buildings.
- Equity in the allocation of human and material resources among regions and among schools within regions: for example, qualified and experienced teachers, school heads, classroom teaching materials and school facilities.
- The reading and mathematics achievement levels of pupils and their teachers: for example, pupils' reading and mathematics scores.

Other information that was also used for this study was drawn from official reports published by the Botswana Ministry of Education. These were the current Basic Education Curriculum, Upper Primary Grade 6 Syllabus, English Teacher's Guides, Readers, and past Grade 7 English examination papers.

### **Conclusion**

Botswana, like many other countries, has a substantial number of children that are not mastering basic developing reading skills by the end of primary education. In Botswana, it is now becoming increasingly necessary to connect the information on the reading skills that pupils have acquired and are still to acquire more clearly with the teaching-learning process. This is expected to contribute a well agued agenda for a national debate on the type of strategies to employ in order to improve pupils' reading skills. Substantial inputs to the area of textbook development, pre-service training of teachers and more specifications of classroom teaching strategies are expected to come from the debate.

The data requirements for the research study are adequately covered by the information collected through SACMEQ II project. The information included

characteristics' of pupils and their learning environment, pupils' reading achievement levels, and characteristics' of teachers and their views on teaching and learning process. Additional information on the teaching learning process was drawn from official publications of the Ministry of Education.

## **CHAPTER 3:**

### **Previous Research on Reading in Botswana**

#### **Introduction**

One of the important recommendations from Botswana's 1993 Commission on Education stated that periodic surveys should be carried out to evaluate the extent to which the objectives of the Official National Curriculum are being achieved or realised (Ministry of Education, 1994: Recommendation 17). Unfortunately to date, there has only been a limited amount of research in the area of reading literacy. This problem was recently recognised by Darko-Ampem (2004) in a study of the reading habits of Standard 5-7 pupils in Botswana.

Habits of reading are generally influenced by culture, the availability of books in libraries and book shops, as well as the ability to read well. The availability of well stocked libraries in public places and schools encourages both children and adults to read - especially those with sufficiently developed reading skills.

#### **The Culture of Reading in Botswana**

It has been observed that there is a lack of a "reading culture" in Botswana. This is reflected by an underdeveloped publishing industry which has a small market. A paper issued by the Botswana National Library Services in 2005 indicated that:

*"Botswana are said to be a non-reading society; it is mostly school-going pupils who engage in reading, and they don't have much choice as they have to read to pass their examinations. After schooling, it has been observed, very little reading is done. A few*

*people who continue with further education at university or at technical/professional institutions read within their field of studies. Most, if not all, material at tertiary level comes from outside the country. Because of the low readership, publishing output is skewed towards educational materials, which have a reasonable market.” (Motlhabane, 2005, p.1)*

A number of studies have examined reasons for the lack of a reading culture in Botswana. The results of the National Literacy Survey in 2003 (Central Statistics Office, 2004) reported that a substantial proportion of individuals indicated either “nothing to read” or “lack of interest” as their main reason for not reading. This may be an indication of lack of access to, or unavailability of, reading materials as well as the limited availability of public libraries.

Batswana women read more than men and generally read religious books including the Bible while men read mostly newspapers. Similar findings on the type of material read were also registered by Mathangwane and Arua (2006) in their study on family literacy in rural communities. The study indicated that parents mostly read Bibles, hymn books, newspapers and magazines where as children mostly read school text books. Regarding, reading habits among children, girls read more than boys (Darko-Ampem, 2004).

The culture of oral tradition heavily influences preference of oral communication among Batswana in general which leads to low readership and absence of reading habits. Culturally, knowledge is passed orally from one generation to another through stories and folktales as well as riddles and idioms by community elders. There is also little or no integration of print literacy culture into the daily lives of Batswana which is clearly evidenced by a preference for oral invitations to social events. Molosiwa (2003) in her study of language and literacy issues in Botswana highlighted the heavy influence of Batswana cultural preference for oral over written language.



### Availability of Reading Materials in Schools

The average number and sampling errors of class library books per pupil have been presented for Botswana's seven regions in Table 3.1 below. The average number of class library books per pupil ranges from a low of 1.6 books in the West region to a high of 3.4 books in Central South region. Although previous research studies on Reading Literacy have indicated the importance of classroom libraries or book corners in assisting pupils to sufficiently develop reading skills, Botswana schools' classroom libraries are still poorly resourced with an average of fewer than three books per pupil. A lack of reading resources limits children's choice of reading material, and also discourages them to read which has a negative impact on the development of their reading skills. The situation is even worse in areas where there is no public library. Disparities still exist across the country and within the regions in terms of availability and number of books in classroom libraries.

**Table 3.1: Mean and sampling errors of class library books per pupil (SACMEQ II)**

<b>Region</b>	<b>Class library books per pupil</b>	
	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SE</b>
Central North	1.8	0.29
Central South	3.4	0.53
Gaborone	1.8	0.40
North	2.8	0.58
South Central	2.1	0.38
South	3.2	0.66
West	1.6	0.41
<b>Botswana</b>	<b>2.5</b>	<b>0.19</b>

**Source: SACMEQ II Data Archive**

During the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA) study of Reading Literacy conducted during 1990-1991, Botswana was among the lowest countries in terms of levels of resources for reading and had predominantly small school libraries (Elley, 1992).

In Table 3.2 the first column of figures has presented the average number of books in pupils' homes for Botswana's seven regions. The average number of books at home ranges from a low of 13 books in Central North region to a high of 50 books in Gaborone. The average Botswana Grade 6 pupil had around 25 books at home. There seem to be three groups in terms of number of books at home. The first group has an average that is twice the national average: Gaborone (50 books), the second group has an average that is close to half the national average: Central North (13 books) and West (14 book), and the third group has an average that is close to the national average: North (22 books), South (26 books), South Central (33 books) and Central South (18 books).

**Table 3.2: Mean and sampling errors of books at home and percentages and sampling errors of pupils having own reading textbook (SACMEQ II)**

Region	Books at home		Own reading textbook	
	Mean	SE	%	SE
Central North	13.0	2.46	77.7	3.66
Central South	18.3	3.17	83.6	3.54
Gaborone	50.0	9.15	73.8	6.72
North	21.5	3.88	75.8	5.98
South Central	33.4	5.80	75.8	3.71
South	26.8	5.98	76.3	4.62
West	14.3	4.37	73.1	9.15
<b>Botswana</b>	<b>24.7</b>	<b>1.99</b>	<b>77.4</b>	<b>1.82</b>

**Source: SACMEQ II Data Archive**

Also presented in Table 3.2, in the third column, were the percentages of pupils having their own reading text book for Botswana’s seven regions. The percentage of Grade 6 pupils with their own reading textbooks ranged from a low of 73.8 percent in Gaborone to a high of 83.6 percent in Central South. For Botswana overall around 23 percent of Grade 6 pupils reported not having their own reading textbooks. Given the major investments that have been made by the government – these figures were somewhat disappointing. The rather large percentage of pupils without their own reading textbook was likely to negatively affect the development of pupils’ reading skills because they were less likely to practice reading if they have to share a reading textbook.

## How Children are Taught to Read in Schools

The strategies and methods used to support the development of reading skills among pupils are largely influenced by the choice of teaching activities that the reading teacher makes. The choice of activities can be influenced by the reading teacher's perception regarding its importance on developing reading skills. In Table 3.3 below the percentages and sampling errors for activities of teaching reading rated as "most important" have been presented.

**Table 3.3: Percentages and sampling errors for the activities of teaching reading (SACMEQ II)**

Activity	Activity rated as 'most important'	
	%	SE
Listening to reading	3.2	0.89
Silent reading	1.1	0.53
Learning new vocabulary	25.3	2.83
Sounding words	8.0	1.58
Reading for comprehension	50.2	3.01
Taking books home to read	6.2	1.32
Reading materials in home	3.3	0.91
Reading aloud in class	2.5	0.93

**Source: SACMEQ II Data Archive**

The percentage for activities rated as "most important" ranged from a low of 1.1 percent for "silent reading" to a high of 50.2 percent for "reading for comprehension". A majority of Grade 6 reading teachers viewed either "reading for comprehension" (50.2 percent) or "learning new vocabulary" (25.3 percent) as the most important activity for teaching reading. The results may imply that a majority of Grade 6 teachers emphasize strategies to improve comprehension as they perceive it as the most important in developing reading skills.

The percentages and sampling errors for strategies of teaching reading have been presented in Table 3.4 below. The percentages for strategies of teaching reading ranged from a low of 32.1 percent for “using materials made by teacher” to a high of 92.1 percent for “asking questions to test comprehension”.

**Table 3.4: Percentages and sampling errors for the strategies of teaching reading (SACMEQ II)**

Approach	Percentage indicating ‘often used’	
	%	SE
Introducing passage before reading	41.4	2.85
Asking questions to test comprehension	92.1	1.50
Asking questions to deepen understanding	89.9	1.75
Using materials made by teacher	32.1	2.51
Reading aloud to the class	57.8	2.97
Giving positive feedback	88.7	1.86

**Source: SACMEQ II Data Archive**

There seem to be two groups of strategies of teaching reading. The first group was indicated as “often used” by more than around 90 percent of Grade 6 teachers: “asking questions to test comprehension” (92.1 percent), “asking questions to deepen understanding” (89.9 percent) and “giving positive feedback” (88.7 percent). The second group was indicated by less than around 60 percent of Grade 6 teachers: “reading aloud” (57.8 percent), “introducing passage before reading” (41.4 percent), and “Using materials made by teacher” (32.1 percent). These results suggested that teachers in Botswana placed a strong emphasis on the use of questions and feedback in their teaching.

## **Teaching Aids and Teaching Guides**

The availability of teaching aids and guides enhances the diversity and attractiveness of different teaching methods. In Table 3.5 the percentages and sampling errors for Grade 6 reading teachers with three types of teaching aid have been presented for Botswana's seven regions.

### **(a) Maps**

The percentages for maps ranged from a low of 62.0 percent in the West region to a high of 85.0 percent in Central North region. Overall 77.1 percent of teachers reported having maps. There were two groups in terms of percentages of teachers with maps. The first group had close to 80 percent of teachers with maps: Central North (85.0 percent), Central South (83.3 percent), South Central (79.0 percent), Gaborone (78.2 percent), and North (77.2 percent). The second group had less than 70 percent of teachers with maps: South (66.4 percent), and West (62.0 percent).

Although the average of maps in classrooms was reasonable, at the national level there were almost one quarter of the pupils (22.9 percent) that were in classrooms without maps. This is an unsatisfactory situation because it is impossible to do a good job on reading geography without access to maps.

### **(b) English Dictionary**

The percentages for English dictionary range from a low of 75.3 percent in Gaborone region to a high of 90.4 percent in Central South region. Overall 83.9 percent of Grade 6 teachers reported having English dictionaries. There were two groups in terms of percentages of Grade 6 teachers with English dictionaries. The first group had close to 90 percent of Grade 6 teachers with English dictionaries: Central South (90.4 percent), North (87.3 percent), and South Central (85.0 percent). The second group had close to 80 percent of Grade 6 teachers with English dictionaries: South

(82.4 percent), Central North (82.3 percent), West (76.9 percent), and Gaborone (75.3 percent).

Just as for maps, the average of the dictionary in classroom was far from satisfactory. A dictionary is essential for classroom teaching and one would have expected 100 percent coverage.

**Table 3.5: Percentages and sampling errors for reading teachers with teaching aids in the school (SACMEQ II)**

	Teaching aids					
	Map		English dictionary		Teacher's guide	
	%	SE	%	SE	%	SE
Central North	85.0	5.48	82.3	6.00	92.2	4.06
Central South	83.3	5.31	90.4	4.59	77.7	6.20
Gaborone	78.2	8.34	75.3	8.06	77.7	9.17
North	77.2	7.70	87.3	5.95	85.0	6.05
South Central	79.0	5.64	85.0	4.80	81.4	4.69
South	66.4	7.81	82.4	5.76	87.5	5.26
West	62.0	7.90	76.9	7.33	86.3	5.03
<b>Botswana</b>	<b>77.1</b>	<b>2.53</b>	<b>83.9</b>	<b>2.20</b>	<b>83.7</b>	<b>2.23</b>

**Source: SACMEQ II Data Archive**

### **(c) Teacher's Guide**

The percentages for teacher's guide ranged from a low of 77.7 percent in Central South and Gaborone regions to a high of 92.2 percent in Central North region. Overall 83.7 percent of Grade 6 teachers reported having teacher's guide. There were two groups in terms of percentages of Grade 6 teachers with teacher's guides. The first group had close to 90 percent of Grade 6 teachers with teacher's guides: Central North (92.2percent), South (87.5 percent), West (86.3 percent) and North (85.0 percent). The second group had close to 80 percent of Grade 6 teachers with

teacher's guides: South Central (81.4 percent), Central South (77.7 percent), and Gaborone (77.7 percent).

About 16 percent of pupils are in classrooms with teachers without teaching guides. This is unsatisfactory because teaching guides are essential for classroom teaching and one would have expected 100 percent coverage.

### Classroom Assessment of Reading Skills

As part of teaching children how to read, reading teachers in Botswana administer reading tests periodically to assess the skills that children have acquired and to establish areas where the children are having major difficulties. The results of these tests assist teachers to plan remedial activities for children with major difficulties. The percentages and sampling errors for frequency of reading test have been presented in Table 3.6 below for Botswana's seven regions.

**Table 3.6 Percentages and sampling errors for the frequency of reading tests (SACMEQ II)**

Region	Frequency of reading tests					
	Less often		2/3 per month		1 + per week	
	%	SE	%	SE	%	SE
Central North	11.9	4.86	33.9	7.23	54.2	7.35
Central South	7.8	3.03	30.6	7.22	61.7	7.07
Gaborone	15.6	7.44	24.8	7.75	59.7	9.19
North	19.3	7.20	15.6	6.89	65.1	8.68
South Central	8.7	3.86	19.8	5.20	71.5	5.79
South	10.9	4.69	23.3	7.47	65.7	8.61
West	15.1	5.98	28.5	8.65	56.4	9.25
<b>Botswana</b>	<b>11.5</b>	<b>1.82</b>	<b>25.6</b>	<b>2.75</b>	<b>62.8</b>	<b>2.96</b>

Source: SACMEQ II Data Archive



**(a) Less Often**

The percentages for less often frequency of reading test ranges from a low of 7.8 percent in Central South region to a high of 19.3 percent in North region. Overall 11.5 percent of Grade 6 teachers reported administering reading test less often.

**(b) Two or Three Per Month**

The percentages for two or three per month frequency of reading test ranges from a low of 15.6 percent in North region to a high of 33.9 percent in Central North region. Overall 25.6 percent of Grade 6 teachers reported administering reading test two or three per month.

**(c) At Least One Per week**

The percentages for at least one per week frequency of reading test ranges from a low of 54.2 percent in Central North region to a high of 71.5 percent in South Central region. Overall 62.8 percent of Grade 6 teachers reported administering reading test at least one per week.

Although a substantial proportion of Grade 6 teachers reported administering reading test at least once a week, there is still about 37 percent who reported not administering any reading test per week. This is unsatisfactory situation because it will take longer for the teachers to establish the areas that children are having difficulties and render necessary assistance.

**National Assessment of Reading Skills**

In addition to periodic tests that are administered by individual teachers, pupils are also assessed at the end of Grade 7 through a Primary School Leaving Examination (PLSE) which is a national examination that is administered by the Botswana Examination Council to diagnose weaknesses in student achievement with the view

of informing the teaching and learning process at Junior Secondary education level. The past PLSE papers (Ministry of Education, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006.) show that the exam covers expository, narrative and document reading domains and skills reflected in the Primary Education English Curriculum. The skills covered in the exam include retrieving explicit and interpreting implicit information as well as critically evaluating the text form and content. The examination results give information on student performance in different cognitive levels across the syllabus content.

The proportion of pupils getting grade C or better in the Primary School leaving English Examination has been increasing. For example, the proportion increased from 64.0 percent in 2003 to 70.6 percent in 2005 (Ministry of Education, 2005). The results may be indicating that about 30 percent of pupils leave the Primary Education cycle without sufficiently developed English skills.

### **International Assessment of Reading Skills**

Botswana has participated in a number of international studies of Reading Literacy. The studies provided important information about the impact of different policies on the reading achievements of children and comparisons of the achievements of Botswana's pupils compared with other pupils in other countries in the region. The research linked differences in the reading achievement levels and reading habits of children to variations in policies and practices existing in different countries. The studies also provided national baseline data which was suitable for monitoring levels and patterns of reading achievements over time.

Most of the results of these studies indicated that Botswana's pupils on average can not read well. For example, in a comparative study on Reading Literacy conducted during 1990-1991 by the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational

Achievement, Botswana's pupils managed to correctly respond only to short simple passages where the test items required limited processing or the answer was clearly stated in the passage. This is an indication that the pupils had very limited reading ability. Botswana pupils obtained an average score of 330 with a standard error of 43 and a substantial proportion of pupils were below the chance (or "guessing") mark of 25 percent (Elley, 1992). The pupils performed relatively better on narrative items followed by expository then documents.

The results of the SACMEQ II project conducted during 2000-2001 were similar. Botswana performed slightly above the SACMEQ II average of 500 (a mean reading test score of 521.1 with a standard error of 3.47). However, the results indicated that, a substantial proportion of Botswana Grade 6 pupils did not reach the "minimum" level of mastery (44.2 percent) and only 15.7 percent reached the "desirable" level of mastery.

## **Conclusion**

The available literature on reading in Botswana has indicated quite clearly that there is a lack of a reading culture among both adults and children. This has negatively affected the publishing industry and availability of reading material across the country. The publishing industry is biased towards the production of educational material.

Based on international reading assessments Botswana's Grade 6 pupils have demonstrated only limited reading ability. This low performance may well be associated with the limited choice and number of books available for pupils to read (because class libraries are poorly resourced and some pupils do not have their own reading textbook).

The use of classroom reading assessments varied across regions and schools. Although a substantial proportion of teachers reported giving a reading test once or more per week, some teachers are still giving reading tests less often. There is a need to standardise the frequency of classroom reading assessments in an effort to assist teachers to respond more effectively to the varied needs of pupils in developing reading skills, especially the areas where pupils have major difficulties.

The provision of teaching aids, reading textbooks, and books for classroom libraries is still a major challenge across the country. The non availability of teaching materials negatively affects the overall quality of teaching, and may also increase disparities in the teaching strategies among the regions and schools.

## **CHAPTER 4**

# **The Construction of the SACMEQ Reading Test: What Reading Domains and What Reading Competencies Were Assessed?**

### **Introduction**

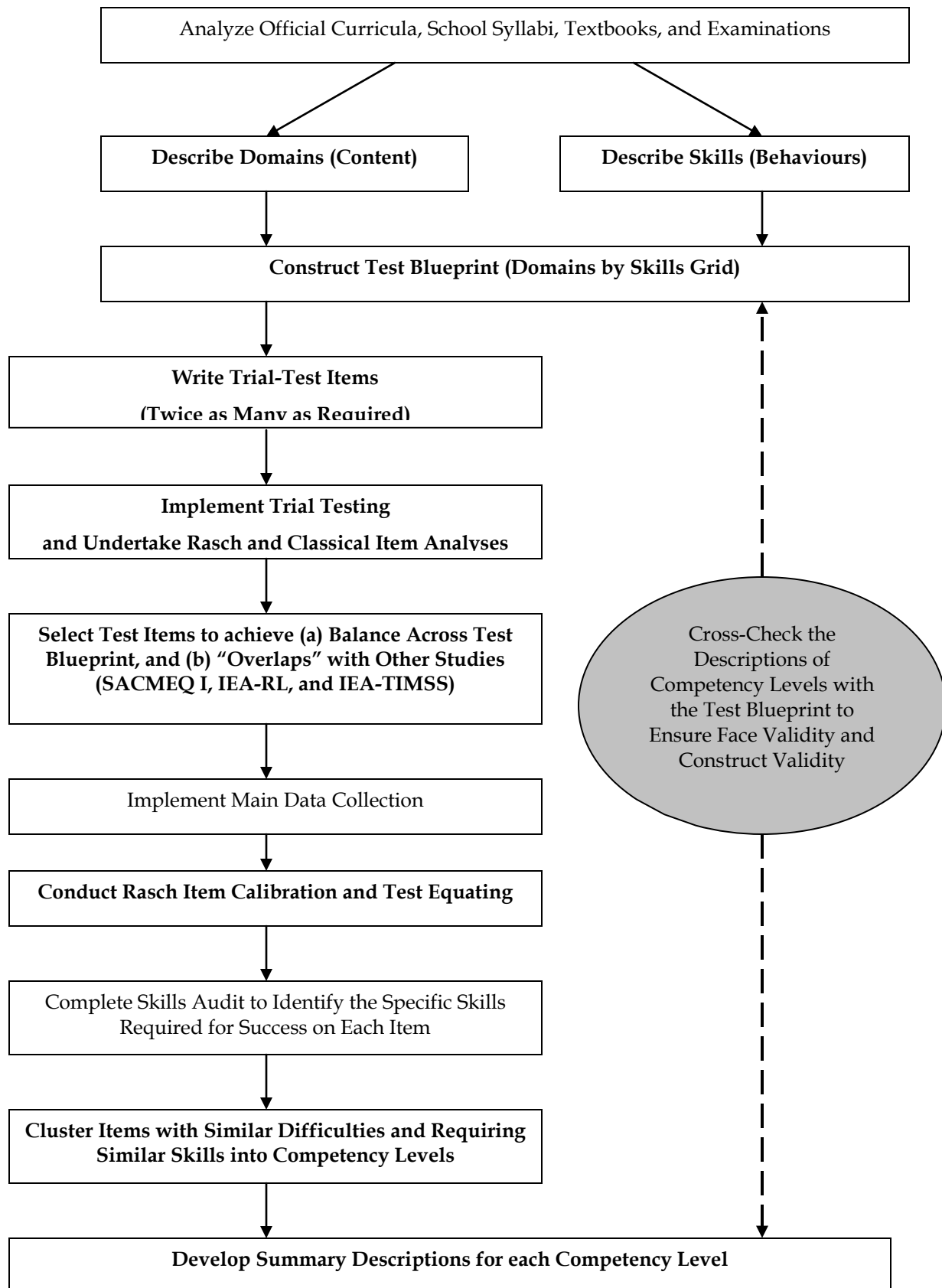
This chapter will describe how the SACMEQ II reading test was constructed. This will cover the process of test construction, the structure of the test (definition of reading literacy, reading domains, description of reading skills and construction of a test blueprint), identification of levels of competencies and score ranges.

The reading test construction for SACMEQ II project was undertaken carefully in order to ensure that the structure of the pupil reading test was compatible with the content (domains) and behaviours (skills) derived from detailed analyses of the curricula, syllabi, exams, and textbooks used in the SACMEQ countries.

### **SACMEQ II Reading Test Construction**

The key steps involved in constructing SACMEQ II project reading test have been presented in diagrammatic form in figure 4.1 below. This process aimed to ensure high levels of face validity and construct validity by achieving compatibility between the test blueprint (framework for test construction) and the descriptions of increasing levels of competence generated from a Rasch analysis of the item difficulty levels in combination with a skills audit of test items (Ross, Saito, Dolata, Ikeda, Zuze, Murimba, Postlethwaite, and Griffin, 2006, p. 3).

**Figure 4.1: Main Steps Involved in Test Construction for the SACMEQ II Project**



## **The Structure of the SACMEQ II Reading Tests**

### **(a) The Definition of “Reading Literacy”**

During the SACMEQ II Project “reading literacy” was defined as “the ability to understand and use those written language forms required by society and/or valued by the individual” (Ross, Saito, Dolata, Ikeda, Zuze, Murimba, Postlethwaite, and Griffin, 2006, p.4).

This definition was used by the 35 countries that participated in the International Reading Literacy Study that was conducted by the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (Elley, 1992). The SACMEQ National Research Coordinators (NRCs) for the SACMEQ I Project also accepted this general definition. The NRCs found that the definition was general enough to accommodate the diversity of traditions and languages represented in the SACMEQ countries, and was also sufficiently specific to provide guidance for test construction.

### **(b) The Three Reading Domains**

During the SACMEQ II Project an initial detailed curriculum analysis was undertaken across all countries in order to define (after an exhaustive discussion of the most important skills contained within reading curricula at Grade 6 level) the reading skills that were considered by all countries to be the most important. A great deal of time was invested in this process by the NRCs in an effort to enhance the validity of the tests by ensuring that they provided a balanced coverage of the main reading domains and the required reading skills. The NRCs made a decision to accept the three broad content domains for reading literacy (presented in Figure 4.2) that had been adopted for the International Reading Literacy Study, and also previously applied by the NRCs in the SACMEQ I Project (Ross, Saito, Dolata, Ikeda, Zuze, Murimba, Postlethwaite, and Griffin, 2006, p.4).

**Figure 4.2: The Three Domains for the SACMEQ II Reading Test**

**Narrative prose:** Continuous texts in which the writer aims to tell a story – whether this be fact or fiction.

**Expository prose:** Continuous text in which the writer aims to describe, explain, or otherwise convey factual information or opinion to the reader.

**Documents:** Structured information organized by the writer in a manner that requires the reader to search, locate, and process selected facts, rather than to read every word of a continuous text.

### **(c) A “Proposed” Hierarchy of Reading Skills**

In order to enable the establishment of a meaningful dimension of increasing competence that could be applied to both the SACMEQ I and II reading tests, it was decided that the construction of the SACMEQ II test should draw upon advanced psychometric procedures. This permitted valid comparisons to be made of the reading performance of countries across the two projects

To achieve this result the first step was to undertake an intensive examination of the curricula in order to identify descriptive skill levels that would define a recognizable and meaningful dimension. Taking this dimension in combination with the three domains of reading formed a framework (or blueprint) for the construction of suitable test items. There were five reading skill levels identified as shown in Figure 4.3 (Ross, Saito, Dolata, Ikeda, Zuze, Murimba, Postlethwaite, and Griffin, 2006, p.5).



**Figure 4.3: The “Proposed” Skill Levels for the SACMEQ II Reading Test**

**Level 1:** Pupils at this level should be able to link words and pictures where the pictures depict common objects of a “concrete” nature.

**Level 2:** Pupils at this level should be able to link words to more abstract concepts such as propositions of place and direction, and, perhaps, ideas and concepts such as comparatives and superlatives (happiest, biggest, below, etc.)

**Level 3:** Pupils at this level should be able to link words (such as a phrase or short sentence) from one setting to words in another setting where there is a word match between the two settings.

**Level 4:** Pupils at this level should be able to deal with longer passages of text that contain a sequence of ideas and content, and that require understanding derived from an accumulation of information gathered by reading forward.

**Level 5:** Pupils at this level should be able to read forwards or backwards through a text in order to: confirm understanding, or link new information with a piece of information encountered previously, or link ideas from separate parts of a text, or demonstrate the capacity to infer an author’s intention.

**(d) Constructing the Test Blueprint by Combining Domains with Skill Levels**

The NRCs acknowledged that each of the skill levels specified in Figure 4.3 needed to be carefully interpreted within the context of the kind of text (or reading domain) that was being encountered by pupils - for any single level, the description of the skills had to be refined in order to more closely reflect whether the reader was dealing with, for example, a fictional story (narrative), a factual account (expository), or a graph, chart, or diagram (document). After deliberating on this matter for some time, the NRCs then proceeded to examine the intersections of the three reading domains (Figure 4.2) with the five skill levels (Figure 4.3) in order to form the test blueprint (Figure 4.4).

In Figure 4.4 the numbers of items in the cells were approximately in proportion to the time spent on parts of the reading curriculum in the SACMEQ countries, and they reflected the advice received from national curriculum experts.

A total of 83 test items was selected for the SACMEQ II reading test, - with (a) 32, 26, and 25 items allocated to the narrative, expository, and documents domains, respectively; and (b) 6, 22, 26, 18, and 11 items set at skill levels 1 to 5, respectively (Ross, Saito, Dolata, Ikeda, Zuze, Murimba, Postlethwaite, and Griffin, 2006, p.6).

### **Constructing “Overlapped Tests” to Use in Scaling**

After completing the reading test blueprints, the NRCs worked in teams to either select or write the required test items for the SACMEQ II reading test. The items were classified according to the cells in the test blueprint. Twice as many items as required were prepared for each cell so that the rejection of poor items after the trial testing did not result in a shortage of items in some cells. When the preparation and classification of items was completed, the item pools were sent to all countries for review by panels of curriculum specialists. The review resulted in editorial changes to the items and recommendations for additional items by the panel members who made sure that the items met the requirements of the respective national curricula (Ross, Saito, Dolata, Ikeda, Zuze, Murimba, Postlethwaite, and Griffin, 2006, p.7).

**Figure 4.4: The Test Blueprint for the SACMEQ II Pupil Reading Test**

Skill Level	Reading Domain			
	Narrative	Expository	Documents	
<b>Level 1</b>	Word/picture association involving positional or directional prepositions requiring the linkage of a picture to a position or a direction in order to answer the question	Word/picture association involving positional or directional prepositions requiring the linkage of a picture to a position or a direction in order to answer the question	Word/picture association involving positional or directional prepositions requiring the linkage of a picture to a position or a direction in order to answer the question	
<b>Items</b>	2	2	2	6
<b>Level 2</b>	Recognising the meaning of a single word and being able to express it as a synonym in order to answer the question	Recognising the meaning of a single word and being able to express it as a synonym in order to answer the question	Linking simple piece of information to item or instruction	
<b>Items</b>	7	6	9	22
<b>Level 3</b>	Linking information portrayed in sequences of ideas and content, when reading forward	Linking information portrayed in sequences of ideas and content, when reading forward	Systematic search for information when reading forward	
<b>Items</b>	8	10	8	26
<b>Level 4</b>	Seeking and confirming information when reading backwards through text	Seeking and confirming information when reading backwards through text	Linking more than one piece of information in different parts of a document	
<b>Items</b>	9	5	4	18
<b>Level 5</b>	Linking ideas from different parts of text. Making inferences from text or beyond text, to infer author's values and beliefs	Linking ideas from different parts of text. Making inferences from text or beyond text.	Use of embedded lists and even subtle advertisements where the message is not explicitly stated	
<b>Items</b>	6	3	2	11
<b>Total Items</b>	32	26	25	83

### **Using a “Skills Audit” to Identify “Derived” Competence Levels**

The preparation of the SACMEQ II reading test was based on a systematically-generated test blueprint that described “proposed” levels of competence in reading. A means of assessing whether the levels proposed in the test blueprints in Figures 4.4 were compatible with a detailed examination of the actual test items located at different difficulty levels along the dimensions that had been generated was provided by the results of the Rasch analyses. The “derived” levels of competence were the descriptions that were obtained after the NRCs had conducted the skills audit.

First the items were arranged in order of difficulty, and then examined item-by-item in order to describe the specific skills required to provide correct responses. Once items had been linked to specific skills they were placed into groups of test items such that the items in each group had similar difficulty values and shared a common “theme” with respect to the underpinning competencies required to provide correct responses.

The next step was to compare the “proposed” levels of competence to the “derived” levels of competence in order to check the accuracy of the item writers’ skills and the validity of the test (Ross, Saito, Dolata, Ikeda, Zuze, Murimba, Postlethwaite, and Griffin, 2006, p.10).

### **Reading Competencies Generated from the “Skills Audit”**

The skills audit for the reading test resulted in the identification of eight levels of competence for each test. This was more than had been proposed in the test blueprints.

There was a strong correspondence between the descriptions of the five blueprint levels and most of the derived levels arising from the skills audit – which suggested

that the three “extra” levels were defining more detail on the same reading scale. That is, the overall dimension remained substantially the same, but the skills audit meant that the empirically-generated (or “derived”) dimension of reading was, as expected, somewhat more detailed than the subjectively described (or “proposed”) dimension used to stimulate test and item development. The levels of reading competency generated from skills audit have been presented in Appendix 4.1.

The NRCs believed that the use of a skills audit to generate the eight levels presented in Appendix 4.1 was important because the competencies provide a more concrete analysis of what pupils and teachers can actually do, and they also suggest instructional strategies relevant to pupils who are learning at each level of competence. These kinds of descriptions are of great assistance for the construction of textbooks, the design of teacher in-service training programmes, and the development of general classroom teaching strategies - because all of these activities require a sound knowledge of the skills already acquired and the higher order skills that should be aimed at in order to transfer to the next stage of learning.

New levels were identified and derived through the skills audit, but as can be seen in Appendix 4.1, the match between the “proposed” and “derived” levels in the dimensions of reading competency were strikingly similar. This indicated that the NRCs had been quite successful in designing tests according to specifications as set out in the original test blueprints. It also provided clear evidence of the content and construct validity of the reading tests (Ross, Saito, Dolata, Ikeda, Zuze, Murimba, Postlethwaite, and Griffin, 2006, p.13).

## The Score Ranges for the Competency Levels

The software used to generate the Rasch reading scores automatically adjusted the scores to a scale with an arbitrary zero point and a standard deviation of one. As a result many pupils were assigned negative scores. Most educationalists are not comfortable with such score patterns. A decision was made to undertake a linear transformation of the reading scores that would result in the mean and standard deviation of pupil scores for the SACMEQ II tests being 500 and 100, respectively (for the pooled data with equal weight given to each country). This meant that a score of 500 was equal to the average of all SACMEQ II country mean scores. The transformed scores have been referred to as “500 Scores”.

The Rasch analysis allowed the ability of the pupils to be matched to the difficulty of the test items – which made it possible for pupils and items to be mapped onto the same scale. This meant that the pupils could also be grouped in the same “ability” or “difficulty” range as the items that had similar difficulty values. In Table 4.1, the ranges of the “500 Scores” that defined the eight reading competency levels, respectively, have been presented. The table also contains the percentages of pupils that were located at each competency level (Ross, Saito, Dolata, Ikeda, Zuze, Murimba, Postlethwaite, and Griffin, 2006, p.14).

**Table 4.1: Reading Competency Levels Cut-off Points and Frequency Distributions**

Reading Competency	Rasch Score Range	500 Score Range	Percentage at Competency Level (SE)	
			Pupils	
			SACMEQ I	SACMEQ II
1 : Pre Reading	Lte -1.765	Lte 373	3.2	6.7
2 : Emergent Reading	Gt-1.765- -1.332	Gt 73- 414	7.1	14.9
3: Basic Reading	Gt-1.332- -0.881	Gt414- 457	22.2	18.4
4: Reading for Meaning	Gt-0.881- -0.334	Gt457- 509	28.7	20.2
5: Interpretive Reading	Gt-0.334- 0.232	Gt509- 563	19.1	16.8
6: Inferential Reading	Gt 0.232- 0.807	Gt563- 618	9.3	10.7
7: Analytical Reading	Gt 0.807- 1.692	Gt618- 703	7.2	8.4
8: Critical Reading	Gt 1.692	Gt703-	3.3	3.8

## **Conclusion**

This chapter has described procedures that were employed in constructing the SACMEQ II reading test. The structure of the reading test was congruent with the content and behaviors derived from the detailed analyses of the curricula, syllabi, exams, and textbooks used in the SACMEQ countries, - successfully designed according to specifications of the original blueprint set out by the NRCs.

The Rasch scaling procedure was used to generate descriptions of the “levels of increasing pupil’s competence”. This way of describing pupil’s reading achievement offers a mechanism for describing the pupil’s performance in a manner that is more meaningful within a teaching and learning context.

**CHAPTER 5:**  
**The Reading Achievement of Botswana's Grade 6 Pupils:**  
**How Does it Compare with the Performance of Grade 6**  
**Pupils in the other SACMEQ Countries?**

**Introduction**

The expectation of many educators is that reading literacy skills are sufficiently developed during primary education cycle, such that by end of the cycle pupils have mastered language skills sufficient to cope with the next level of education. This expectation was also registered by subject area teachers during the Situational Analysis of Secondary Level Education in Botswana (International Reading Association, 2005) who stated that the assumption is that it is the responsibility of primary school teachers to support pupils to develop adequate literacy skills during Primary Education. The expectation was based on the common goal of the curriculum which is to develop language mastery right from primary school level as a tool for effective communication, critical thinking, study, and work (Ministry of Education, 2004).

This chapter has commenced with a discussion of the reading achievement of Botswana's Grade 6 Pupils. First a description of the meaning of the test scores has been presented and this is followed by an analysis of Grade 6 pupils' average reading scores for Botswana's seven regions and various groups of Grade 6 pupils. Finally, a discussion has been provided concerning SACMEQ II project Grade 6 average reading scores for each country and various groups of Grade 6.



### **The Meaning of Average Scores on the Reading Test**

The software used to generate the Rasch reading scores automatically adjusted the scores to scale with an arbitrary zero point and a standard deviation of one. This meant that many pupils were assigned negative scores. Most educationalists are not comfortable with score patterns of this kind. Therefore it was decided to undertake a linear transformation of the reading scores that would result in the mean and standard deviation of pupil scores for the SACMEQ II test being 500 and 100, respectively (for the pooled data with equal weight given to each country). As a result a score of 500 was equal to average of all SACMEQ II country mean scores.

### **Reading Achievement of Botswana's Grade 6 Pupils**

The reading achievement scores for Botswana's Grade 6 pupils have been presented in Table 5.1. The overall average for Botswana was 521.1, which indicated that Botswana's Grade 6 pupils were slightly above the average of 500 for SACMEQ II overall.

**Table 5.1: Means and sampling errors for the reading test scores of pupils with all items (SACMEQ II)**

Pupil performance on all items		
Reading		
Region	Mean	SE
Central North	506.1	6.56
Central South	498.7	6.17
Gaborone	577.2	14.77
North	530.0	8.86
South Central	531.9	9.46
South	523.4	9.89
West	504.9	6.79
<b>Botswana</b>	<b>521.1</b>	<b>3.47</b>

**Source: SACMEQ II Data Archive**

The percentages of pupils reaching the 8 SACMEQ II reading literacy levels have been presented in Table 5.2. The percentages of Grade 6 pupils ranged from a low of 2.8 percent for Level 1 (Pre reading) to a high of 24.1 percent for Level 5 (Interpretive meaning). For Botswana overall, only 26.7 percent of Grade 6 pupils had literacy levels above level 5.

**Table 5.2: Percentages and sampling errors for literacy levels of pupils (SACMEQ II)**

<i>Region</i>	Percentage of pupils reaching the reading competence level															
	<b>1</b>		<b>2</b>		<b>3</b>		<b>4</b>		<b>5</b>		<b>6</b>		<b>7</b>		<b>8</b>	
	%	SE	%	SE	%	SE	%	SE	%	SE	%	SE	%	SE	%	SE
Central North	2.6	0.64	9.6	1.42	18.6	1.94	24.6	1.72	23.8	2.19	12.6	2.01	7.1	1.53	1.2	0.55
Central South	5.3	0.82	10.0	1.57	21.6	2.00	20.7	2.00	22.4	1.61	12.6	2.25	5.7	1.04	1.6	0.50
Gaborone	1.3	0.52	4.6	1.30	5.9	1.22	17.6	2.54	19.5	2.58	15.5	2.22	25.1	3.88	10.5	3.91
North South	2.4	0.95	8.5	1.70	10.6	1.99	22.0	1.60	23.1	2.53	18.4	2.19	13.4	2.30	1.6	0.64
South Central	2.5	0.69	5.9	1.18	11.9	1.55	23.5	2.11	26.6	2.42	16.6	1.99	9.5	1.45	3.5	2.44
South West	1.3	0.49	5.8	1.24	16.4	2.39	25.6	3.20	27.0	2.14	11.2	1.63	8.2	1.76	4.6	2.53
West	2.8	0.93	8.5	2.01	19.4	3.71	26.5	1.98	23.5	3.11	13.1	2.34	5.4	1.26	0.9	0.51
<b>Botswana</b>	<b>2.8</b>	<b>0.29</b>	<b>7.7</b>	<b>0.57</b>	<b>15.7</b>	<b>0.83</b>	<b>23.0</b>	<b>0.89</b>	<b>24.1</b>	<b>0.88</b>	<b>14.0</b>	<b>0.83</b>	<b>9.5</b>	<b>0.70</b>	<b>3.2</b>	<b>0.75</b>

Source: SACMEQ II Data Archive

### Differences in Reading Achievement Among Botswana's Regions

In Table 5.1 the average reading scores for Grade 6 pupils have been presented for Botswana's seven regions. These average scores ranged from a low of 498.7 in Central South to a high of 577.2 in Gaborone. This result for Gaborone was extremely high and compared very favourably with average scores achieved for other SACMEQ countries.

There seemed to be "three groups" of regions in terms of reading achievements in Botswana. A "lower group" of regions located close to the SACMEQ Grade 6 overall average (Central South, Central North and West), a "middle group" located around

20 to 30 points above the SACMEQ average (North, South Central and Southern), and an “upper group” more than 50 points above SACMEQ average (Gaborone).

In Table 5.2 the percentages and sampling errors for the reading literacy levels of Grade 6 pupils have been presented for Botswana’s seven regions. The percentages of Grade 6 pupils who had reading literacy levels above level 5 ranged from a low of 19.4 in the West region, to a high of 55.1 in Gaborone region. There seem to be three groups in terms of reading literacy levels. The first group had more than 50 percent of Grade 6 pupils who had literacy levels above level 5 (Gaborone). The second group has between 20 and 50 percent (North (33.4 percent), South Central (29.6 percent), South (24.0 percent), and Central North (20.9 percent)). The third group has less than 20 percent (Central South (19.9 percent), and West (19.4 percent)).

### **Differences in Reading for Groups Defined by Gender, Socioeconomic Status and Location**

The average reading scores for different groups of Grade 6 pupils in Botswana have been presented in Table 5.3.

#### **(a) Gender**

The average reading score for Grade 6 girls (534.4) was much higher than that of Grade 6 boys (507.2). Grade 6 boys’ average reading score was located close to the SACMEQ average (7 points above SACMEQ average), whereas the Grade 6 girls’ average reading score was located 34 points above SACMEQ average.

#### **(b) Socioeconomic Status (SES)**

Grade 6 pupils from high socioeconomic status home backgrounds performed much better (41.1 points higher) than those from low socioeconomic status home background. The average reading score for Grade 6 pupils from low socioeconomic

status home background was located close to SACMEQ average (2.5 points above), while the average reading score for those from high socioeconomic status home background was much higher than SACMEQ average (43.6 points above).

**Table 5.3: Means and sampling errors for the reading test scores of pupils by sub-groups (SACMEQ II)**

Sub-groups	Pupil performance on all items	
	Reading	
	Mean	SE
<i>Gender</i>		
Boys	507.2	3.93
Girls	534.4	3.60
<i>Socio-economic level</i>		
Low SES	502.5	2.73
High SES	543.6	5.84
<i>School location</i>		
Isolated/Rural	502.4	3.48
Small town	525.5	7.91
Large city	549.6	8.26
<b>Botswana</b>	<b>521.1</b>	<b>3.47</b>

Source: SACMEQ II Data Archive

### (c) School Location

The average reading score for Grade 6 pupils range from a low of 502.4 for schools located in Isolated or Rural areas to a high of 549.6 for schools in a Large City. Grade 6 pupils from schools located in Towns or Large Cities performed much higher than those from Isolated or Rural areas.

## Differences in Reading Achievement Across SACMEQ Countries

The average reading score for Grade 6 pupils in the SACMEQ II project have been presented for each SACMEQ country in the first two columns in Table 5.4.

**Table 5.4: Means and sampling errors for the reading test scores of pupils by SACMEQ countries (SACMEQ II)**

Country	Pupil performance on all items					
	All		Boys		Girls	
	Mean	SE	Mean	SE	Mean	SE
Botswana	<b>521.1</b>	<b>3.47</b>	507.2	3.93	534.4	3.60
Kenya	<b>546.5</b>	<b>4.97</b>	546.4	5.41	546.6	5.43
Lesotho	<b>451.2</b>	<b>2.93</b>	446.7	3.15	454.8	3.19
Malawi	<b>428.9</b>	<b>2.37</b>	431.9	2.77	425.6	2.60
Mauritius	<b>536.4</b>	<b>5.51</b>	523.1	6.08	550.7	5.68
Mozambique	<b>516.7</b>	<b>2.29</b>	518.4	2.59	514.1	2.60
Namibia	<b>448.8</b>	<b>3.13</b>	446.0	3.51	451.3	3.23
Seychelles	<b>582.0</b>	<b>3.10</b>	549.7	4.42	614.2	4.21
South Africa	<b>492.3</b>	<b>9.00</b>	478.3	7.96	504.8	10.28
Swaziland	<b>529.6</b>	<b>3.74</b>	525.0	4.16	533.9	3.80
Tanzania	<b>545.9</b>	<b>5.03</b>	554.3	5.72	538.2	5.33
Uganda	<b>482.4</b>	<b>6.12</b>	479.6	5.71	485.9	8.31
Zambia	<b>440.1</b>	<b>4.47</b>	439.8	4.96	440.7	4.69
Zanzibar	<b>478.2</b>	<b>1.49</b>	479.1	2.34	477.4	2.19

**Source: SACMEQ II Data Archive**

The average reading scores ranged from a low of 428.9 in Malawi to a high of 582.0 in Seychelles. There were four groups of countries in terms of reading achievement. The first group was clustered at the high end of the reading achievement scale: Seychelles (582.0), Kenya (546.5) and Tanzania (545.9). The second group was clustered within 40 points above the middle point of the reading scale: Mozambique (516.7), Botswana (521.1), Swaziland (529.6) and Mauritius (536.4). The third group was clustered within 40 points below the middle point of the reading scale: South

Africa (492.3), Uganda (482.4), Zanzibar (478.2). The fourth group was clustered at the low end of the reading achievement scale: Lesotho (451.2) Namibia (448.8), Zambia (440.1) and Malawi (428.9). Grade 6 pupils from Seychelles performed exceptionally well relative to the other SACMEQ countries.

### **(a) Gender**

In the last four columns of Table 5.4, the average reading scores and sampling errors for Grade 6 boys and girls in the SACMEQ II project have been presented for each SACMEQ country. The average reading scores for Grade 6 boys ranged from a low of 431.9 in Malawi to a high of 554.3 in Tanzania, whereas the average reading scores for Grade 6 girls ranged from a low of 425.6 in Malawi to a high of 614.2 in Seychelles. There were three groups in terms of reading achievement of Grade 6 boys and girls. In the first group of SACMEQ countries Grade 6 girls performed much better than boys: Seychelles (64.5 points higher), Mauritius (27.6 point higher), Botswana (27.2 points higher), and South Africa (26.5 points higher). In the second group of SACMEQ countries Grade 6 boys performed much better than girls: Tanzania (16 points higher). In the third group of SACMEQ countries the average reading scores for Grade 6 boys and girls were more less the same - with a score difference of less than ten points: Swaziland (8.9 point), Lesotho (8.1 points), Malawi (6.3 points), Uganda (6.3 points), Namibia (5.3 points), Mozambique (4.3 points), Zanzibar (1.7 points), Zambia (0.9 points), and Kenya (0.2 points).

### **(b) Socioeconomic Status**

In Table 5.5 the average reading scores and sampling errors for Grade 6 socioeconomic status in SACMEQ II project have been presented for each SACMEQ country. The average reading scores for Grade 6 low socio-economic status ranged

from a low of 421.5 in Namibia to a high of 561.8 in Seychelles, while the average reading scores for the high socio-economic status ranged from a low of 440.7 in Malawi to a high of 594.4 in Seychelles. The gap in the average reading scores between low and high socio-economic status ranged from a low of 5.3 in Lesotho to a high of 103.4 in South Africa. There were three groups of SACMEQ countries in terms of the gap between average reading scores of low and high socio-economic status. The first group had a gap of more than 50: South Africa (103.4), Namibia (64.6), and Kenya (52.2). The second group had a gap of 10-50: Mauritius (46.8), Tanzania (46.4), Botswana (41.1), Zambia (32.9), Seychelles (32.6), Zanzibar (24.1), Uganda (23.2), Swaziland (21.9), Malawi (17.8), and Mozambique (12.5). The third group had a gap less than 10: Lesotho (5.3).

**Table 5.5: Means and sampling errors for the reading test scores of pupils for socio-economic group by SACMEQ countries (SACMEQ II)**

Country	Socio-economic level			
	Low SES		High SES	
	Mean	SE	Mean	SE
Botswana	502.5	2.73	543.6	5.84
Kenya	525.3	4.58	577.5	6.61
Lesotho	449.2	2.98	454.5	4.48
Malawi	422.9	2.51	440.7	3.27
Mauritius	508.3	5.03	555.1	6.69
Mozambique	510.5	2.77	523.0	2.68
Namibia	421.5	1.72	486.1	5.98
Seychelles	561.8	4.68	594.4	4.10
South Africa	440.2	4.87	543.6	12.91
Swaziland	519.1	2.76	541.0	5.79
Tanzania	528.8	4.83	575.2	6.72
Uganda	472.3	5.84	495.5	8.49
Zambia	423.6	6.91	456.5	5.93
Zanzibar	468.1	1.87	492.2	2.66

**Source: SACMEQ II Data Archive**



### **(c) School Location**

The average reading scores and sampling errors for Grade 6 school location in SACMEQ II project have been presented for each SACMEQ country in Table 5.6. The average reading scores for Grade 6 from Isolated or Rural schools ranged from a low of 410.6 in Zambia to a high of 576.1 in Seychelles, while for those from Town schools the average reading scores ranged from a low of 429.8 in Malawi to a high of 598.6 in Tanzania, and the average reading scores ranged from a low of 455.8 in Malawi to a high of 606.4 in Kenya for Large City schools. The average reading scores were highest in Large City schools for all countries except for Namibia, and Tanzania where the average reading scores are highest in town schools.

**Table 5.6: Means and sampling errors for the reading test scores of pupils for school location by SACMEQ countries (SACMEQ II)**

<b>Country</b>	<b>Isolated/Rural</b>		<b>Town</b>		<b>Large City</b>	
	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SE</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SE</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SE</b>
Botswana	502.4	3.48	525.5	7.91	549.6	8.26
Kenya	530.8	5.42	559.0	12.46	606.4	13.56
Lesotho	441.3	3.33	461.9	5.08	482.1	10.12
Malawi	423.5	2.70	429.8	5.53	455.8	8.51
Mauritius	531.3	6.49	530.3	17.25	544.3	10.31
Mozambique	502.3	5.93	510.5	3.73	533.3	4.22
Namibia	417.6	1.92	470.3	9.51	539.7	11.90
Seychelles	576.1	7.62	572.6	4.58	596.7	5.05
South Africa	426.6	5.13	482.9	14.57	600.4	16.70
Swaziland	517.8	3.27	552.2	11.03	562.2	13.16
Tanzania	525.1	4.41	598.6	9.65	597.2	9.95
Uganda	475.0	6.69	508.8	16.94	520.9	30.76
Zambia	410.6	3.42	444.9	6.22	480.5	8.51
Zanzibar	468.3	1.61	478.4	3.98	501.8	3.85

**Source: SACMEQ II Data Archive**

## **Conclusion**

### **Overall Reading Achievements**

Botswana Grade 6 pupils performed slightly above SACMEQ II average reading score with an average reading score of 521.1. Disparities exist in terms of reading achievements across regions of Botswana. The Botswana regions can be categorized into three groups in terms of reading achievements: regions performing at SACMEQ II average reading score, regions performing slightly above SACMEQ II average reading score and regions performing well above SACMEQ II average reading score. Grade 6 pupils from Gaborone region performed well above SACMEQ II average. The average reading score for Botswana Grade 6 from Gaborone region (577.2) was extremely high and compared very favourably with average scores achieved for other SACMEQ countries.

A majority of Botswana Grade 6 pupils have reading literacy levels below level 5. Only 26.7 percent of Botswana Grade 6 pupils have literacy levels above level 5. Gaborone is the only region where more than 50 percent of Grade 6 pupils have literacy levels above level 5.

### **Reading Achievements for Different Groups**

#### **(a) Gender**

Botswana Grade 6 girls performed much better than boys. The average reading score for Botswana Grade 6 girls (534.4) was well above SACMEQ II average reading score, whereas Botswana Grade 6 boys' average reading score was close to SACMEQ II average reading score. Botswana was one of the SACMEQ countries where Grade 6 girls out performed Grade 6 boys.

### **(b) Socio-economic Status**

Botswana Grade 6 pupils from high socio-economic status home backgrounds performed much better than those from low socio-economic status home backgrounds. The average reading score for high socio-economic status Botswana Grade 6 pupils was very high (543.6) and compared well with average reading scores achieved for other SACMEQ countries

### **(c) School Location**

Botswana Grade 6 pupils from Large City schools performed much better than those from Towns and Isolated or Rural schools. The average reading scores for Botswana Grade 6 pupils from Large City schools (549.6) was well above SACMEQ II average reading score, and compares well with average reading scores achieved for other SACMEQ countries.

**CHAPTER 6:**  
**The Reading Competencies of Botswana’s Grade 6 Pupils:**  
**What does the SACMEQ Research Show us about “The**  
**Skills They Have Acquired” and “The Skills They Need**  
**To Acquire”?**

**Introduction**

A “skills audit” for the purpose of this study is the process of identifying skills required by pupils to correctly answer SACMEQ II reading test items at various competence levels. The process entails examining each reading test item (item-by-item) in order to describe the specific skills required to provide correct responses. The process produces a detailed description of the specific skills required to provide a correct response for each reading test item.

In this chapter, a “skills audit” of SACMEQ II reading test items was performed to construct the reading skills required to get the correct answers for each reading test item. This was achieved by describing the reading steps and directions the pupils must perform in order to identify the correct answer for each test item. The percentages of pupils who gave a correct answer to each test item were also calculated. The results of the analyses have been presented in Appendix 6.1.

**Examples of a “Skills Audit” for Reading Test Items at Each Level of the SACMEQ II Reading Test**

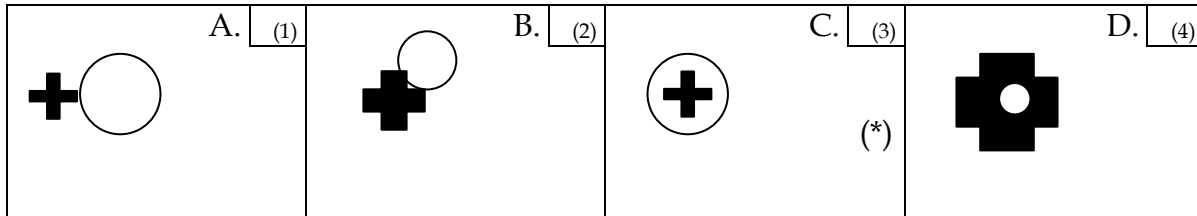
The reading skills required to get the correct answers to each test items were constructed as follows for each level of competence:

**Level 1: Pre Reading**

**(a) Example Test Item**

In the questions on this page, choose the diagram that matches the word or sentences

3. This cross is inside the circle.



**(b) Detailed Skills Audit**

For this SACMEQ II test item, to get the correct answer the pupil will need to

- First identify a “cross” and a “circle” in the diagrams
- Then match the meaning of the word “inside” with the diagram that best describes its meaning.
- And lastly identify the diagram which describes the meaning of the phrase “this cross is inside the circle”.

**(c) Official SACMEQ Description of skills at this level**

- Matches words and pictures involving concrete concepts and everyday objects.
- Follows short simple written instructions.

## Level 2: Emergent Reading

### (a) Example Test Item

Read the following passage and then answer the questions below.

#### **The Indian Tailor Bird**

One of the most interesting birds I have seen is the Indian Tailor Bird. It is a small olive green bird that doesn't look at all unusual, yet it has a most unusual way of making its nest. The birds work together in pairs. First they find a leaf, the right size, and make holes along the edges with their beaks. Through these holes they thread grass. One bird pushes the thread from the outside, while the other bird sits in the nest and pushes it back until the edges of the leaf are sewn together to make a kind of bag, still hanging on the tree, in which the Tailor Bird lays its eggs.

50. What does the Tailor Bird use in place of thread?

- A.  (1) Grass
- B.  (2) String
- C.  (3) Spider web
- D.  (4) Thorns

### (b) Detailed Skills Audit

For this SACMEQ II test item, to get the correct answer the pupil will need to

- First match the word "thread" in the question with the word "thread" in the text
- Then use the text immediately adjacent to it by reading on

### (c) Official SACMEQ Description of skills at this level

- Matches words and pictures involving prepositions and abstract concepts; using cuing systems (by sounding out, using simple sentence structure, and familiar words) to interpret phrases by reading on.

### **Level 3: Basic Reading**

#### **(a) Example Test Item**

**In the questions on this page, choose the best word to complete each sentence**

8. We found Aunt Mary's house. It was near a large tree and had a red roof. We knocked on the door and waited for my

A.  brother   B.  Aunt   C.  mother

#### **(b) Detailed Skills Audit**

- For this SACMEQ II test item, to get the correct answer the pupil will need to
- First identify the relation of the author with the owner of the house (Aunt Mary is Aunt)
- Then relate the house to the door that is being knocked (knocking the door of Aunt Mary's house)
- And match the relation to the owner of the house with the word with similar meaning (using context that the house belongs to Aunt and expect to see Aunt)

#### **(c) Official SACMEQ Description of skills at this level**

Interpret meaning (by matching words and phrases, completing a sentence, or matching adjacent words) in short and simple text by reading on or reading back.

## Level 4: Reading for Meaning

### (a) Example Test Item

Read the following passage and then answer the questions below.

#### **The Bird And The Elephant**

A large tree grew in the middle of the jungle. At the top, a small bird had made a nest for her family of three baby birds. One day, an elephant came by. He leaned against the trunk, and scratched his back. The tree started to crack and sway. The baby birds, full of fear, huddled against their mother. She stuck the tip of her beak out of the nest, and said: "Hey, big animal, there are many trees around here! Why shake this one? My children are afraid, and could fall out of their nest."

The elephant said nothing, but he looked at the bird with his small eye, flapped his large ears in the wind, and left.

The next day, the elephant returned and scratched against the trunk once more. The tree began to sway. The frightened baby birds once again huddled against their mother's wings. Now Mother Bird was angry. "I order you to stop shaking our tree," she cried, "or I will teach you a lesson!"

"What could you do to a giant like me?" laughed the elephant. "If I wanted to, I could give such a push to this tree that your nest and your children would be flung far and wide."

The mother bird said nothing.

The next day, the elephant returned and scratched again. Quick as a flash, the mother bird flew into one of the elephant's enormous ears, and there, tickled the elephant by scratching him with her feet. The elephant shook his head ... nothing happened. So he begged the bird to leave and promised to stop scratching against the trunk.

The bird then left the elephant's ear and returned to her nest, beside her children.

Never again did the elephant return to scratch his back.

48. The story ends happily because ...

- |     |   |     |                                |
|-----|---|-----|--------------------------------|
| A.  | <table border="1"><tr><td>(1)</td></tr></table> | (1) | The elephant died              |
| (1) |   |     |                                |
| B.  | <table border="1"><tr><td>(2)</td></tr></table> | (2) | The elephant did not come back |
| (2) |   |     |                                |
| C.  | <table border="1"><tr><td>(3)</td></tr></table> | (3) | The tree was strong enough     |
| (3) |   |     |                                |
| D.  | <table border="1"><tr><td>(4)</td></tr></table> | (4) | The birds learned to fly       |
| (4) |   |     |                                |

### (b) Detailed Skills Audit

For this SACMEQ II test item, to get the correct answer the pupil will need to

- First find out why the bird was not happy by interpreting the story
- Then find out what happened at the end of the story
- And interpret the sentence "never again did the elephant return"
- And match the phrase "never again did the elephant return" with a phrase with same meaning



**(c) Official SACMEQ Description of skills at this level**

- Reads on or reads back in order to link and interpret information located in various parts of the texts.

**Level 5: Interpretive Reading**

**(a) Example Test Item**

**Read the following passage and then answer the questions below.**

<p>Tabu Dunia, famously known as Tadi, is wanted by police. He is 38 years old and employed at the Kalu Company Limited as a salesman. He is tall and slim with a brownish complexion. He has a scar on his right cheek.</p> <p>He is wanted for running away with 20 million pulas from his company. He has been missing from his place of work for four days now. Anybody who knows his whereabouts is asked to report it to a nearby police station. A big reward is waiting for anybody who helps the police find him.</p> <p>26. The wanted man's common name is ...</p> <p>A. (1) Tabu</p> <p>B. (2) Kalu</p> <p>C. (3) Dunia</p> <p>D. (4) Tadi</p>
--

**(b) Detailed Skills Audit**

For this SACMEQ II test item, to get the correct answer the pupil will need to

- First interpret the phrase “famously known”
- Then match the phrase “famously known” with the phrase “common” which has the same meaning in the question
- And read forward to join two pieces of adjacent information to locate the man's common name (“famously known” and “as Tadi”)

**(c) Official SACMEQ Description of skills at this level**

- Reads on or reads back in order to combine and interpret information from various parts of the text in association with external information (based on recalled factual knowledge) that “completes” and contextualizes meaning.

**Level 6: Inferential Reading**

**(a) Example Test Item**

Read the comic strip and then answer the questions below.

1 ALWAYS CHECK TO SEE THAT THERE IS A FILM IN THE CAMERA BEFORE YOU GO OUT.

2 MAKE SURE THE PERSON YOU ARE PHOTOGRAPHING IS IN THE CENTRE OF THE PICTURE AND IS AS LARGE AS POSSIBLE.

3 DO NOT TAKE A PHOTO WITH THE SUN SHINING STRAIGHT INTO THE CAMERA.

4 DO NOT GET TOO CLOSE TO THE PERSON YOU ARE PHOTOGRAPHING. IF YOU DO THE PICTURE WILL BE BLURRED.

5 TAKE THE LENS CAP OFF! ALWAYS CHECK TO SEE THAT THERE IS NOTHING IN THE WAY OF THE APERTURE.

6 PRESS THE SHUTTER RELEASE SLOWLY WHEN YOU ARE READY TO TAKE THE PICTURE. SHUTTER RELEASE.

72. Why should you take the lens cap off?
- A. (1) To let a lot of light into the camera.
  - B. (2) So that it doesn't get in the way of the aperture. (\*)
  - C. (3) To move the camera closer to you.
  - D. (4) So the camera will be quiet.

### **(b) Detailed Skills Audit**

For this SACMEQ II test item, to get the correct answer the pupil will need to

- First examine and interpret information related to different pictures and words in a non-traditional (comic strip) instructional document
- Then locate the diagram with the information related to the lens cap
- And make a judgment about the purpose of a particular instruction made by the author.

### **(c) Official SACMEQ Description of skills at this level**

- Reads on or reads back through longer texts (narrative, document or expository) in order to combine from various parts of the text so as to infer the writer's purpose.

## Level 7: Analytical Reading

### (a) Example Test Item

**Read the following passage and then answer the questions below.**

#### **The Bird And The Elephant**

A large tree grew in the middle of the jungle. At the top, a small bird had made a nest for her family of three baby birds. One day, an elephant came by. He leaned against the trunk, and scratched his back. The tree started to crack and sway. The baby birds, full of fear, huddled against their mother. She stuck the tip of her beak out of the nest, and said: "Hey, big animal, there are many trees around here! Why shake this one? My children are afraid, and could fall out of their nest."

The elephant said nothing, but he looked at the bird with his small eye, flapped his large ears in the wind, and left.

The next day, the elephant returned and scratched against the trunk once more. The tree began to sway. The frightened baby birds once again huddled against their mother's wings. Now Mother Bird was angry. "I order you to stop shaking our tree," she cried, "or I will teach you a lesson!"

"What could you do to a giant like me?" laughed the elephant. "If I wanted to, I could give such a push to this tree that your nest and your children would be flung far and wide."

The mother bird said nothing.

The next day, the elephant returned and scratched again. Quick as a flash, the mother bird flew into one of the elephant's enormous ears, and there, tickled the elephant by scratching him with her feet. The elephant shook his head ... nothing happened. So he begged the bird to leave and promised to stop scratching against the trunk.

The bird then left the elephant's ear and returned to her nest, beside her children.

Never again did the elephant return to scratch his back.

47. Which sentence in the story tells us that the elephant thinks he is the strongest? It starts with these following underlined words:

- A. (1) "Hey, big animal ....
- B. (2) "The elephant said nothing ....
- C. (3) "The next day, the elephant returned ....
- D. (4) "What could you do ....

### (b) Detailed Skills Audit

For this SACMEQ II test item, to get the correct answer the pupil will need to

- First Identify meaning of the word strongest in the question
- Then identify a phrase in the text with same meaning with strongest
- And match the sentence "elephant thinks he is the strongest" with "what could you do to a giant like me"

**(c) Official SACMEQ Description of skills at this level**

- Locates information in longer texts (narrative, document or expository) by reading on and reading back; combines information from various parts of the text; infers the writer’s personal beliefs (value systems, prejudices, and /or biases).

**Level 8: Critical Reading**

**(a) Example Test Item**

**Read the following passage and then answer the questions below.**

**Smoke**

The relationship between smoking and cancer, smoking and heart attacks and many other serious diseases is undeniable. Convincing evidence comes from many statistical studies that show the close relationship between the number of cigarettes smoked daily and the probability of dying of cancer or heart attack.

The explanation for this terrible phenomenon comes from research laboratories. It has been shown that a single puff of smoke can break down the DNA in human cells, this being the long molecule which contains the cell’s genetic and metabolic information. What destroys the genetic code are some tar like substances produced by the process of combustion. In chemical terms, these are oxidising molecules, but one can also accurately describe them as little ravenous monsters that tear apart the bonds that keep the DNA together. After each poisonous whiff the DNA patiently reconstructs itself again but clearly at each restoration the probability of errors increases and in the end some malignant genes (which are always present in unstressed DNA) manage to get the upper hand and thus stimulate cancer. This is the destructive process that the cells of the organs which carry the smoke to the lungs have to undergo every time. It is surprising that mouth, tongue, larynx, windpipe and bronchi in smokers are more often affected by malignant tumours.

The smoke’s final destination is the lungs where, besides tar, it deposits natural radioactive substances concentrated by combustion. Every day a heavy smoker one who smokes more than 20 cigarettes a day absorbs the same amount of radiation which he would receive when having a chest Xray. Nicotine, on the other hand, goes straight into the blood stream and has a strong constrictive action on the arteries. This way the circulation of the blood to all the tissues diminishes. That is why skin temperature decreases, sexual organs produce fewer hormones and nervous metabolism slows down. The brain becomes less efficient, dizziness and giddiness appear but such sensations are barely perceived by the heavy smokers. On the contrary, these are very strong sensations in those who smoke for the first time and they constitute the “drug effect” that has led many towards becoming habitual smokers.

80. Smoke is dangerous for the lungs because ...

- A. (1) Nicotine and tar accumulate there.
- B. (2) It causes a greater predisposition to cancer there
- C. (3) Stronger bonds form between DNA and malignant genes
- D. (4) Tar and radioactive substances are deposited there

### **(b) Detailed Skills Audit**

For this SACMEQ II test item, to get the correct answer the pupil will need to

- First locate information on “lungs” and “smoke” in the text by reading on and reading back
- Then links the information to establish multiple meanings including analogy and allegory
- And then matches the information with the phrase with similar meaning in the given responses.

### **(c) Official SACMEQ Description of skills at this level**

- Locates information in longer texts (narrative, document or expository) by reading on and reading back; combines information from various parts of the text so as to infer and evaluate what the writer has assumed about both the topic and the characteristics of the reader – such as age, knowledge, and personal beliefs(value systems, prejudices, and /or biases).

### **Where is the “Average Grade 6 Pupil” in Botswana Located in the Skills Hierarchy**

The average Grade 6 pupil in Botswana had an average reading score of 521.1. This placed this hypothetical pupil at level 5 of the skills hierarchy described above.

That is, the average grade 6 pupil in Botswana had:

(a) Mastered Levels 1 to 4 of the skills hierarchy (which implied that he or she could undertake the following tasks: (i) identify words, pictures with similar meaning and match, (ii) identify familiar words and match in order to interpret adjacent new words, (iii) locate and match phrases with similar meaning across sentences, (iii) read forwards and backwards in order to locate information in longer text).

(b) Was currently mastering Level 5 of the skills hierarchy (which implied that he or she could undertake the following tasks: (i) locate, interpret, and read forward to join two pieces of adjacent information, (ii) use multiple pieces of information to interpret general purpose of a document, and (iii) paraphrase and interpret a single non-adjacent piece of information).

(c) Was yet to fully master levels 6 to 8 of the skills hierarchy (which implied that he or she could not undertake the following tasks: (i) reads on and reads back through longer texts in order to combine information from various parts of the text so as to infer writer’s purpose, (ii) locates information in longer texts by reading on and back; combines information from various parts of the text; infers the writer’s personal beliefs, and (iii) locates information in longer texts by reading on and back in order to combine information from various parts of text so as to infer and evaluate what the writer has assumed about both topic and characteristics of the reader).

### **Specific Test Items where Botswana Grade 6 Pupils had Major Difficulties**

The performance of Botswana Grade 6 pupils on specific test items in the SACMEQ II Project reading test was analyzed by calculating the percentage of correct responses to each of the 83 test items.

The test items were then sorted in order of difficulty so that on the top of the list was the reading test item where the lowest percentage of Grade 6 pupils have succeeded, and so on down the reading test item with the highest percentage of pupils had succeeded.

It was decided to work with a short-list of test items based on a “cut-off point” of 40 percent success. There were 21 reading test items in this group - ranging from a success rate of 7.1 percent for item 80 up to a success rate of 40.0 percent for item 66. This group of “problematic” test items was then placed into four groups: less than 10 percent, 10-20 percent, 21-30 percent, and 31- 40 percent. The results of this analysis have been presented on Table 6.1.



**Table 6.1 Item number, Percentage of Pupils getting Correct Responses, Domain, Competence level and skill description for Items where Grade Six Pupils had major difficulties**

<b>Item number</b>	<b>Percentage of pupils getting correct answer</b>	<b>Domain</b>	<b>Reading Competence Level</b>	<b>Skill description</b>
80	Less than 10	Expository	8	Locate information, reads on and reads back to link words and phrases in order to analyse and infer.
52	10 - 20	Expository	7	Locate information, reads on and reads back to identify words and phrases with similar meaning, combine the pieces of information to identify meaning.
51		Expository	7	
82		Expository	7	
47	21 - 30	Narrative	7	Read on and back to locate information or words and phrases with similar meaning, combine pieces of information to interpret and infer.
49		Narrative	6	
13		Narrative	6	
31	31 - 40	Expository	6	Locate information, words and phrases with similar meaning, and reads on to join pieces of adjacent information in order to interpret.
53		Expository	6	
16		Narrative	6	
57		Document	6	
68		Expository	5	
72		Expository	6	
77		Expository	6	
66		Expository	6	
27		Document	5	
60		Expository	5	
30	Expository	5	Locates phrases with similar meaning and match.	
17	Narrative	5		
81	Expository	5		
14	Narrative	4		

In the first two columns of Table 6.1 the test item number on the test and the difficulty group for the item have been presented. This was followed by the reading domain (narrative, expository, and document), and the reading competence level (as defined by the SACMEQ II research). Finally, descriptions have been included to show the general skill level for the four groups of items.

The “problematic” reading test items were also grouped by domain (expository, narrative and document). The results of this analysis have been presented in Table 6.2. The reading domains have been presented in the first column of Table 6.2,

whereas the item number on the test and the overall skills audit have been presented in the second and third column respectively.

**Table 6.2: Domain, Item number, and Overall skill description for Groups of Items where Grade Six Pupils had major difficulties**

<b>Domain</b>	<b>Item number</b>	<b>Overall skill audit</b>
Expository	80	Locate information, read on and read back to link words, phrases and combine pieces of information from various parts of the text in order to interpret, infer and evaluate.
Expository	52	
Expository	51	
Expository	82	
Expository	31	
Expository	53	
Expository	68	
Expository	72	
Expository	77	
Expository	66	
Expository	60	
Expository	30	
Expository	81	
Narrative	47	
Narrative	49	
Narrative	13	
Narrative	16	
Narrative	17	
Narrative	14	
Document	57	Locate information, read forward to join pieces of adjacent information and interpret.
Document	27	

Generally the Grade 6 pupils had major problems with items from the expository domain. That is, they had difficulty in reading texts that were “continuous text in which the writer aims to describe, explore, or otherwise convey factual information or opinion to the reader” (see Figure 4.2). Many of these expository items required the pupils to locate information, read on and back to link or combine pieces of information from various parts of the text in order to interpret, infer and evaluate the author’s assumptions, beliefs and motives.

## Conclusion

It is possible to describe the reading achievement of the average Botswana Grade 6 pupil in the fashion:

First, the average Botswana Grade 6 pupils has acquired level 1 to 4 of the skills hierarchy and are in the process of acquiring level 5 of the skills hierarchy. This implied that the average Grade 6 pupil could undertake the following reading tasks: (i) identify words, pictures with similar meaning and match, (ii) identify familiar words and match in order to interpret adjacent new words, (iii) locate similar words, phrases and match across sentences, (iv) read forwards and backwards in order to locate information in longer text, and (v) locate information, and reads on to join pieces of adjacent information in order to interpret.

Second, the average Botswana Grade 6 pupil needs to acquire Levels 6 to 8 of the skills hierarchy. This implied that the average Grade 6 pupils need to learn to undertake the following reading tasks: (i) read on and read back through longer texts in order to combine information from various parts of the text so as to infer writer's purpose, (ii) locate information in longer texts by reading on and back; combine information from various parts of the text in order to infer the writer's personal beliefs, and (iii) locate information in longer texts by reading on and back in order to combine information from various parts of text so as to infer and evaluate what the writer has assumed about both topic and characteristics of the reader.

The research results presented in this chapter clearly demonstrated that "expository texts" were particularly difficult for Botswana's Grade 6 pupils. That is, these pupils had greater difficulty in dealing with text that present factual information and less

difficulty in dealing with text that told a story (“narrative texts”) and that presented structured information (“documents”).

## CHAPTER 7: The Teaching of Reading in Botswana: Are the Reading Skill Requirements of Botswana's Grade 6 Pupils Being Addressed by the Current Curriculum, Teaching Approaches, and Teaching Materials?

### Introduction

All education systems of the world are based on statements about the aims, objectives, and/or goals of education. These describe the “targets” that education systems are required to work towards. In the following discussion these statements are described collectively as “objectives”.

When examining the objectives of an education system it is important to distinguish between “general objectives” and “specific objectives”.

### General Objectives

These statements describe the broad directions of an education system – and they usually suggest expected long range outcomes. For example, a general objective that describes a broad direction may be found in the first (see Appendix 7.1) of Botswana's “Objectives of Basic Education”: “The Botswana education system should produce a literate and numerate population that can be successful at home and work” (Ministry of Education, 2004, p.4).

Similarly, generally objectives that describe a broad target may be found in the first (see Appendix 7.2) of the “Expected Outcomes of the Botswana's Primary Education Curriculum”: “Acquired language skills to enable self appropriate expression in

English and Setswana as tools of communication and learning” (Ministry of Education, 2004, p.6).

Neither the broad directions nor the broad targets mentioned above provide any concrete guidance about: (a) what should happen in the classroom, or (b) what standard should be applied in order to judge success. For example, the above two general objectives do not provide information about what teaching approaches and what standards should be applied in order to ensure that a person has the literacy skills that are needed to be “successful at home or at work” and/or to ensure that a person has the English and Setswana skills required to display “self appropriate expression in English and Setswana”.

That is, an analysis of the “broad directions” listed in Appendix 7.1 and the “broad targets” listed in Appendix 7.2 will provide very little guidance to classroom teachers concerning their daily work in designing, delivering, and evaluating classroom teaching and learning. The statements in these lists simply provided a very diffuse framework that represented the beginnings of a structure to which detailed specifications of “what to teach” and “how to teach it” can be attached as part of the process of defining: the curriculum, the required teaching materials, and the teaching methods that will be employed in schools.

Critical observers of education systems often describe these kinds of general objectives as “motherhood statements” because they are usually worded in the manner of self-evident truths that most reasonable people would be in favour of supporting. That is, general objectives often portray universal virtues that nobody would normally dare to attack.

## Specific Objectives from the Syllabus and Teacher Guide

Specific objectives describe more tangible or more concrete directions that can be used to provide guidance about the selection of possible teaching-learning activities in the education system – and they often suggest expected short range outputs. There were two sources for the specific objectives associated with the Grade 6 Reading curriculum in Botswana: the “Upper Primary English Syllabus” (Ministry of Education, 2004, p.11) and the “Upper Primary Teacher’s Guide for English Syllabus” (Ministry of Education, 2004, p.4).

For example, a specific objective that described a concrete direction may be found in the first (see Appendix 7.3) of Botswana’s “Specific Objectives for Grade 6 English Reading Syllabus”: “To follow a set of written instructions on how to carry out a process, or play a game” (Ministry of Education, 2004, p.11). Statements of this kind give a reasonable amount of guidance to teachers about “what to teach” and “how to teach it”. Another example of a specific objective that described a concrete direction may be found in the first (see Appendix 7.4) of the Specific Objectives in the Teachers Guide for Grade 6 English Reading Syllabus: “Read independently for information and pleasure different types of literature including poetry, drama, and prose within a basic vocabulary level of 2000 words” (Ministry of Education, 2004, p.4).

A total of 19 specific objectives (labelled OBJ1 to OBJ19 in Appendix 7.3) have been approved by Botswana’s Ministry of Education for the Grade 6 English Reading Syllabus. An additional 9 specific objectives (labelled TGUIDE1 to TGUIDE9 in Appendix 7.4) have been presented in the Teacher’s Guide for Grade 6 English Reading Syllabus.

It is the task of all Ministries of Education to use their specific objectives as the guiding framework for designing and selecting appropriate curriculum materials (“what to teach”) and teaching strategies (“how to teach”). That is, there needs to be clear linkages between a Ministry’s specific objectives and the kinds of activities and behaviours that are expected of pupils in classrooms. If pupils are expected to gain a mastery of a specific competency (say, Skill X), then it is expected that classroom activities and teaching materials are provided so as to provide educational experiences that will develop Skill X. If this is not the case then a Ministry’s educational objectives can not be achieved.

### **The Ministry’s Suggested Pupil Reading Activities**

The centrepiece of the Grade 6 reading programme in Botswana’s primary education system is the officially approved “Standard 6 Pupil’s Book”. This teaching-learning resource was first published in 2005, and was later revised in 2006 by Clohessy, Ratsoma, and Mathole (2006).

The Pupil’s Book contains seven chapters – the first chapter deals with speaking and conversation skills. The sixth chapter focuses on the mechanical skills of completing and writing formal letters. The remaining five chapters of the Pupil’s Book concentrate on reading. These chapters or “units”, cover the following five specific kinds of text that students are expected to read with the aim of extracting meaning.

**Unit 2: Passages** - texts that have “the purpose of informing or educating the reader” (p.23).

**Unit 3: Instructions/Directions/Reference Skills** - texts that (a) guide persons on “how to do or use instruction correctly” (p.39), (b) show persons following them to



“know exactly where to go or what to do”(p.45), and (c) illustrate “how words are arranged in alphabetical order “(p.47).

**Unit 4: Stories/Drama** - texts that contain “characters” and “events” which occur at “a certain place or time” and sometimes have “a message for the reader” (p.51).

**Unit 5: News Reports** - texts that make citizens become “educated and informed” because “they know what is happening in our country and in other parts of the world” (p.61).

**Unit 7: Poetry** - texts that are “usually written in verses”, that often “use rhyming words and sounds to give a flowing and musical feeling”, and which sometimes present a moral in that they “teach the reader about good ways of behaving” (p.78).

Each of the above five reading units in the Pupil’s Book contained sets of “reading activities” associated with the different texts. Each text was associated with sets of questions that were intended to examine pupils’ capacity to understand the meaning of the text. For example, the first activity in “Unit 2: Passages” (Activity 2.1) contained a short passage of text (115 words) entitled “A Drive Through Botswana”. This text was then followed by 10 reading comprehension questions.

In order to answer the questions the pupils needed to apply reading competencies that ranged from very simple reading skills such as locating information in the text (“Was the writer travelling alone?”) to more complex skills such as examining different phrases to interpret information (“What is the main point of this passage?”).

## Are Pupil Reading Activities Well-Matched to the Specific Objectives for Reading?

If Botswana's primary schools are to be able to address the specific objectives for reading that are set down in the Grade 6 Syllabus and Grade 6 Teacher's Guide then we need to be certain that the reading activities required of Grade 6 pupils are "well-matched" to these requirements. The expression "well-matched" means that all of the reading skill levels specified in the specific objectives have been addressed by appropriate reading activities. If these clear linkages are not present then Botswana's primary schools cannot be expected to produce Grade 6 pupils with the nationally agreed reading skills profile.

The only way to examine the congruence between specific objectives and pupil activities is to subject both areas to a "Skills Audit" based upon an "evidence-based" conceptual framework that has been developed specifically for Grade 6 reading in Botswana.

The most appropriate framework available for this task is the empirically-generated hierarchical set of reading skill levels that was developed from the SACMEQ research programme. This framework was described in Figure 4.4 of Chapter 4. The framework had 8 skill levels ranging from "Level 1: Pre-Reading" to "Level 8: Critical Reading". The word "hierarchical" was important in this context because the SACMEQ reading skill levels are not simply a classification. Rather, they represent an ordered set of skills arranged on a scale of increasing complexity and difficulty.

In the following sections of this chapter a Skills Audit has been applied firstly to the specific objectives set down on the official Syllabus and Teacher's Guide for Grade 6 reading in Botswana, and secondly to the pupil reading activities presented

for Grade 6 pupils in the Pupil’s Book. The classification of specific objectives was undertaken separately for the Syllabus and the Teacher’s Guide.

For both the specific objectives and pupil activities it was decided to present examples of how they were classified according to the hierarchy of reading skill level developed for SACMEQ research programme. This classification required an in-depth analysis of the exact nature of the cognitive steps expected to be taken by Grade 6 pupils if they were to (a) satisfy the specific objectives, and (b) succeed in responding to the questions and tasks associated with the reading activities.

### **Skills Audit of Specific Objectives from Syllabus: Some Examples**

The Specific Objectives from the Grade 6 English Syllabus provide guidance to teachers concerning the reading competencies that were expected of Grade 6 pupils. A total of 19 Specific Objectives were approved by the Botswana Ministry of Education. (see Appendix 7. 3).

The linkage of each of the 19 specific objectives (Syllabus) – from OBJ1 to OBJ19 with the SACMEQ skill levels has been summarised in Table 7.1. In the second column of Table 7.1 it may be seen that the Specific Objectives (Syllabus) were spread across each of the 8 SACMEQ II reading skills levels. The greatest concentration of these was located at Level 4: “Reading for Meaning”.

In the following discussion three of the Specific Objectives (Syllabus) have been subjected to an in-depth analysis in order to provide illustrative examples of how the objectives were classified according to the “cognitive steps” that were expected of pupils in order to satisfy the requirements of the objectives.

**(a) OBJ2: “Follow written directions from any point in the village/town to school”.**

This objective required the pupil to read on and back to locate and link information from various parts of a text in order to interpret. For example, the pupil might be required to undertake the following reading tasks: (i) locate the starting point on the map of the village; (ii) identify and follow recommended routes and directions; (iii) identify all mentioned signs and land marks on the way; and (iv) identify and arrive at the school.

The most appropriate SACMEQ Skill level for this objective was Level 4 (“Reading for Meaning”) because this skill level requires pupils to locate and link pieces of information in various parts of the text in order to interpret.

**(b) OBJ7: “Relate pictorial information to written text”.**

This objective required the pupil to match words that best described a picture, diagram, graph, etc. with similar meaning. For example, the pupil might be required to undertake the following reading task: (i) study the context and composition of a picture and text to identify the meaning of the picture, (ii) examine a range of words that might best describe the picture, and (iii) match a suitable word (or text) with the picture.

The most appropriate SACMEQ Skill level for this objective was Level 1 (“Pre-reading”) because this skill level required the pupil to match words and pictures involving concrete concepts and everyday objects.

**(c) OBJ8: “Identify specific details on, main points from, and form opinion about news read”.**

This objective required the pupil to read on and back to locate and combine pieces of information in order to identify the main points of a news report. For example, the pupil might be required to undertake the following reading tasks: (i) read on and back to locate pieces of information in the news report; (ii) read forward to join pieces of adjacent information in various parts of the news report; and (iii) interpret information to identify the main points in the news.

The most appropriate SACMEQ Skill level for this objective was Level 5 (“Interpretive Reading”) because this skill level required the pupil to locate, interpret, and read forward to join pieces of adjacent information.

### **Skills Audit of Specific Objectives from Teacher Guide: Some Examples**

The Specific Objectives in the Teacher’s Guide for Grade 6 English Syllabus provide guidance to teachers on how and what to teach Upper Primary pupils. The linkage of each of the 9 specific objectives (Teacher’s Guide) – from TGUIDE1 to TGUIDE9 – with the SACMEQ skill levels has been summarized in Table 7.1. In the third column of Table 7.1 it may be seen that the 9 Specific Objectives (Teacher’s Guide) were split almost equally between Levels 1 to 5 and Levels 6 to 8 of the SACMEQ II reading skills levels.

In the following discussion three of the Specific Objectives (Teacher’s Guide) have been subjected to an in-depth analysis in order to provide illustrative examples of how the objectives were classified according to the “cognitive steps” that were expected of pupils in order to satisfy the requirements of the objectives.

**(a) TGUIDE2: “Draw a logical conclusion using varied graphic sources of information”**

This objective would require the pupil to read on and back to locate and combine pieces of information in order to identify the main points of the graphic information. For example, the pupil might be required to undertake the following reading tasks: (i) read on and back to locate pieces of information in the graphic source; (ii) read forward to join pieces of adjacent information in various parts of the graphic source and (iii) interpret information to identify main points of the graphic source.

The most appropriate SACMEQ Skill level for this objective was Level 5 (“Interpretive Reading”) because this skill level required the pupil to locate, interpret, and read forward to join pieces of adjacent information.

**(b) TGUIDE5: “Examine and assess information in a variety of written text in order to make inferences and form judgements”**

This objective required the pupil to read on and back to combine pieces of information from various parts of the text in order to interpret, and make inferences and judgments. For example, the pupil might be required to undertake the following reading tasks: (i) read on and locate pieces of information in various parts of the text; (ii) combine and interpret the pieces of information from various parts of the text; and (iii) make inferences and judgments beyond the text content.

The most appropriate SACMEQ Skill level for this objective was Level 6 (“Inferential Reading”) because this level requires the pupil to read on and back through longer text in order to combine information from various parts of the text so as to infer and make judgements about an author’s intentions or purpose.

**(c) TGUIDE9: “Differentiate between fact and opinion in a variety of texts”**

This objective required the pupil to read on and back to combine pieces of information from various parts of the text in order to infer and evaluate the text. For example, the pupil might be required to undertake the following reading tasks: (i) read on and back to locate pieces of information in various parts of the text; (ii) combine and interpret the pieces of information from various parts of the text; and (iii) make inferences and evaluate the text content.

The most appropriate SACMEQ Skill level for this objective was Level 8 (“Critical Reading”) because this level requires the pupil to read on and back through longer text in order to combine information from various parts of the text so as to infer and evaluate the author’s assumptions and purposes.

**Skills Audit of Activities in the Grade 6 English Pupils’ Book: Some Examples**

The SACMEQ skill levels classification of pupil reading activities in the Grade 6 English Pupil’s Book have been summarised under their five “Unit headings” in Table 7.1. These ranged from “Passages” in column 4 to “Poetry” in column 8. The linkages between the activities and the SACMEQ skill levels varied a great deal across the 5 main groups of activities.

For example, (a) the Passages activities gave pupils practice on Levels 2 to 5, (b) the Directions and Reference activities were concentrated on Level 2 to 4, (c) the Stories activities were widely spread across Level 1 to 6, (d) the News activities were concentrated on Levels 3 to 5, and (e) the Poetry activities were located between Level 3 to 6 - with a high concentration at Level 6.

In the following discussion one activity from each Unit in the Grade 6 English Pupils' Book has been subjected to an in-depth analysis in order to provide illustrative examples of how the objectives were classified according to the "cognitive steps" that were expected of pupils in order to satisfy the requirements of the reading activities.

In each example the text has been re-produced and this has been followed by an example of one of the questions that was provided for pupils across the text on the Pupil's Book. Both of these items have been placed in a box and this has been followed by a description of the steps applied to identify the appropriate SACMEQ skill classification.

**(a) PASS2: "A Passage of Text"**

**A Drive Through Botswana**

When driving through Botswana to visit my daughter and her family in Orapa, I would sometimes think that there was no life in the hot dry countryside. It looked barren, dry and lifeless. However, when we stopped the car and got out to stretch our legs, we would discover beautiful desert flowers nestling among the rocks, or ant lions scooping out the sand to make tunnels for unsuspecting insects to fall into and become their dinner. We would watch the weaver birds flying great distances to get the various things to build their big untidy nest on the telephone poles. These things made me realize that this is a country of hidden beauty and interest.. (extracted from Clohessy, Ratsoma, and Mathole, 2006, p.23)

Question

2. What did the writer feel about the countryside before getting out of the car?

This activity required the pupil to: (i) interpret the meaning of the word "before" (ii) read on and locate the phrase "looked barren, dry and lifeless"; (iii) interpret the phrase; and (iv) use the phrase as part of the answer.



The most appropriate SACMEQ Skill level for this activity was Level 3 (“Basic Reading”) because this skill level required the pupil to interpret meaning in a short and simple text by reading on or reading back.

**(b) REF3: “A Telephone Directory”.**

This activity requires the pupil to: (i) read on and locate the information or phrases about the sections; (ii) match phrases across sentences; and (iii) identify the different sections.

The most appropriate SACMEQ Skill level for this activity was Level 4 (“Reading for Meaning”) because this skill level required the pupil to read forwards and backwards in order to locate information in longer texts, and match phrases across sentences.

**(c) STOR7: “A Story”**

**Leopard’s Spotted Coat**

1. When the greatest one first made the world, Leopard was given a beautiful golden yellow coat, the colour of grass. So he was able to stalk his prey during the day, stealthily creeping through the long grass.
2. Nogwaja the hare, who is small, was sunning himself one day and did not see Leopard stalking him. He was nearly caught by Leopard. Although he got away, he was very angry and decided to teach Leopard a lesson.
3. But Nogwaja had to think of a clever plan that would trick Leopard. All that night he thought and thought. At last he came up with a plan.
4. The next morning Nogwaja waited at the waterhole for Leopard to come for his drink. When Leopard came, he was very thirsty and very hungry, as he had not eaten all night.
5. Nogwaja came out of his hiding place and said, “Good morning Leopard. I hope you have eaten well?”
6. Leopard was not in a good mood, because he was hungry, so he just growled deep in his throat.
7. “I have eaten very well!” said Nogwaja. “Of course I find it easy to get food. My colour helps me. I am invisible at night.. No one sees me when I run across a field. It is a pity your golden coat shows up so well in the moonlight. Of course I wouldn’t dream of trying to advise such a wise animal as you are but ... “Nogwaja paused and looked at Leopard.
8. Leopard knew that Nowaja was sly, but he also knew he was clever.. Should he trust him? It was true that his yellow coat made him invisible during the day, but it showed up like gleaming gold during the night.
9. “What do you suggest, Nogwaja?” asked Leopard, trying not to sound too interested.
10. Nogwaja knew that the smaller plains beyond the hills had just had a great fire and that in some places the grass roots were still burning.
11. “Follow me,” Nogwaja said, “I will show you.”
12. “Keeping as far away from Leopard as he could, Nogwaja led him to where the fire had been.
13. “You see the grey ash, Leopard? You must roll on it. Mind you,” added Nogwaja slyly, “I’m sure that you are brave enough to do it. Only a very brave animal can change the colour of his coat!”
14. Leopard snarled, “You think I, Leopard, am a coward?”
15. With that he leapt on to the burnt grass. A sharp pain shot through his paws as the glowing roots clung to his paws. With a roar of pain, he rolled onto his back to cool his paws, only to find that the burning grass roots bit deep into his yellow coat.
16. Nogwaja sat and watched him and smiled and smiled.
17. But when Leopard stood up and started towards Nogwaja to punish him, Nogwaja saw that wherever the fire had left a black mark on Leopard’s coat, the dappled light of the moon would make him invisible. Nogwaja stood up and ran home to his hole behind the rocks as fast as he possibly could.
18. He had made a terrible mistake. As a result of his advice, Leopard could now hunt at night as well as during the day. (extracted from Clohessy, Ratsoma, and Mathole, 2006, p.53)

**Choose the best answer**

4. What was the terrible mistake Nogwaja made?
  - A. Nogwaja did not manage to kill Leopard.
  - B. Nogwaja came out of his hiding place.
  - C. Leopard could also hunt at night.
  - D. Leopard was afraid of Nogwaja.

The activity required the pupil to: (i) read on to locate the phrase “he had made a terrible mistake”; (ii) read on to locate the sentence “As a result of his advice,

Leopard could now hunt at night as well as during the day”; and (iii) link and interpret information to get the answer.

The most appropriate SACMEQ Skill level for this activity was Level 4 (“Reading for Meaning”) because this skill level requires the pupil to read forwards and backwards in order to locate information in longer text.

**(d) NEWS8: “A News Item”**

**A light to the children**

The Midweek Sun, May 11 2005, by Lesego Kgomonyane

Keneilwe (7) arrives at her foster home. Her face brightens as she sees her foster mother. She joins the rest of the kids playing hide and seek outside. The foster mother shares her daily struggles with the Midweek Sun team. “It is challenging to look after 40 orphans living with HIV and AIDS without proper income,” says the softly spoken mother of two, who is herself HIV positive.

“I love these kids and treat them like my own. I cannot fail them because most of them have been abandoned by either their relatives or rejected by orphanages,” she says from her home, which she has turned into a foster home.

She was diagnosed with HIV 15 years ago and has two children of her own, but is a foster mother to almost 80 children. With no job she relies on donors and what little she makes from her taxi business for sustenance.

At present she houses 30 children between 7 and 14 years old in her three-bedroom house. The rest come in every morning to spend the day. They are fed and given medication. A 19-year-old serves as a teacher, tutoring the little ones on elementary literacy.

“It is a struggle to give them their daily bread, but I try to make ends meet. They love being here, some cry when I take them to their homes,” she says. (extracted from Clohessy, Ratsoma, and Mathole, 2006, p.65)

**Question**

4. Why are so many children in need of help?

This activity required the pupil to: (i) read on and locate pieces of information in various parts of the text (orphans living with HIV and AIDS, have been abandoned by relatives, rejected by orphanages); (ii) combine the pieces of information from various parts of the text; and (iii) interpret information in association with HIV and AIDS issues.

The most appropriate SACMEQ Skill level for this activity was Level 5 (“Interpretive Reading”) because this skill level requires the pupil to read on and back in order to combine and interpret information from various parts of the text in association with external information.

**(e) POEM1: “A Poem”**

Rain  
Rain, rain go away!  
Come again another day.  
Little Tommy wants to play! (extracted from  
Clohessy, Ratsoma, and Mathole, 2006, p.78)

**Question**

1. What is the message of this poem?

This activity required the pupil to: (i) read on and locate pieces of information in various parts of the poem; (ii) combine and interpret the pieces of information from various parts of the poem; and (iii) infer the message of the poem.

The most appropriate SACMEQ Skill level for this activity was Level 6 (“Inferential Reading”) because this level requires the pupil to make judgements about an author’s intentions or purpose beyond text content.

**Overview of Results of Skills Audit**

The results of the Skills Audit of the specific reading objectives (Syllabus and Teacher’s Guide) and the pupil reading activities in the Pupil’s Book have been summarised in Table 7.1. The first column of the table showed the names of 8 SACMEQ reading Skill Levels. The second two columns showed the SACMEQ skill level at which each of the Specific Objectives was located. These have been grouped according to their two sources: the Botswana Specific Objectives for Grade 6 English

Syllabus (Reading) and the Teacher’s Guide for Grade 6 English Syllabus. These columns are followed by 5 columns – which link the various pupil reading activities presented in the Pupils Book to the SACMEQ Skill Levels.

The general pattern of results in Table 7.1 showed that the Specific Objectives were spread fairly evenly across the SACMEQ skill levels. Combining the results for the Syllabus and Teacher’s Guide there were 15 specific objectives located in the lowest four skill levels and 13 specific objectives located in the higher four skill levels.

Now consider the final five columns of Table 7.1. The pupil reading activities were clearly concentrated in Levels 1 to 6 of the SACMEQ skill levels. There were no pupil activities located at Levels 7 to 8. In fact all “Passages” activities were at Level 5 or below, and all “Reference” activities were at Level 4 or below.

It was only “Poetry” that showed a cluster of tasks at the relatively higher level 6. This was to be expected because the “traditional” manner in which poetry is taught in most school systems is to have children read a poem and then ask what the writer was trying to say (“infer”) with the verses that had been provided.

**Table 7.1: The Reading Levels of the Specific Objectives and the Reading Comprehension Activities in the Pupil's Reader**

SACMEQ II Levels	Specific Objectives		Reading Comprehension Activities				
	Syllabus	Teacher's Guide	Passages	Directions and Reference skills	Stories	News reports	Poetry
Level 1: Pre Reading	OBJ7				STOR4		
Level 2: Emergent Reading	OBJ4, OBJ12	TGUIDE4	PAS10	REF5, REF6	STOR5		
Level 3: Basic Reading	OBJ6,OBJ14, OBJ15		PASS1, PASS2, PASS3, PASS4, PASS5, PASS12, PASS13	REF1, REF2, REF4	STOR7	NEWS9, NEWS10, NEWS11	POEM2, POEM3, POEM4, POEM6
Level 4: Reading for Meaning	OBJ1, OBJ2,OBJ3, OBJ5, OBJ16, OBJ19	TGUIDE1, TGUIDE3	PASS7, PASS14	REF3, DIR1	STOR6	NEWS1, NEWS6, NEWS12	POEM5, POEM10, POEM11
Level 5: Interpretive Reading	OBJ8, OBJ10	TGUIDE2,	PASS6, PASS8, PASS9, PASS11		STOR1, STOR8	NEWS2, NEWS3, NEWS4, NEWS5, NEWS7, NEWS8	POEM12
Level 6: Inferential Reading	OBJ9	TGUIDE5, TGUIDE6, TGUIDE7, TGUIDE8			STOR2, STOR3		POEM1, POEM7, POEM8, POEM9, POEM13
Level 7: Analytical Reading	OBJ11,OBJ17						
Level 8: Critical Reading	OBJ13,OBJ18	TGUIDE9					
Total number	19	9	14	6	8	12	13

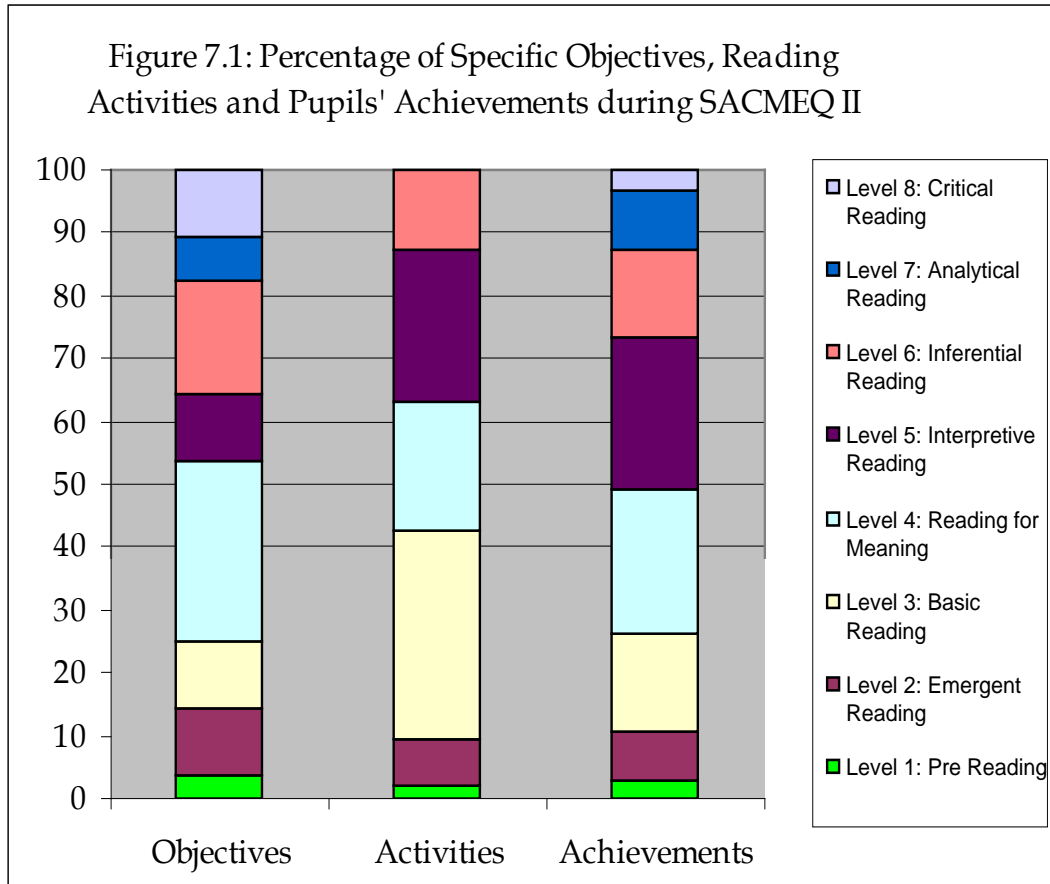
## A Mismatch Between Objectives and Activities?

In order to show the pattern of the results more clearly, the results of the Skills Audit presented in Table 7.1 were further summarised in Table 7.2 by combining skill levels into three broad groups: (i) "mechanical foundation skills" (dealing with recognition of words and pictures in short phrases and sentences); (ii) "working within the text" (dealing with extracting meaning and interpretation of information from within the text); and (iii) "working beyond the text" (dealing with using the text and moving beyond the text to infer, analyze, and evaluate information).

The first two columns of pupils in Table 7.2 have presented the results of this extra summarization. For example, combining the specific objectives (Syllabus) with the specific objectives (Teacher's Guide) indicated that 25.0 percent of the specific objectives were focused on the "mechanical foundation skills" associated with pre-reading, emergent reading, and basic reading. Further, a total of 39.3 percent of the specific objectives were focused on "working within the text", and 35.7 percent on "working beyond the text".

The second column of figures shows a quite different pattern of results. The pupil reading activities were concentrated on "mechanical foundation skills (42.6 percent) and "working within the text" (44.4 percent). Very few pupil reading activities were associated with "working beyond the text" (13.0 percent).

This discrepancy between the Levels of the Ministry's Specific Objectives and the actual reading activities given to pupils is very problematic. It suggests that pupils are not being given tasks that are likely to extend their performance to the kinds of higher skill levels that are expected by the Ministry. In summary, the official reading objectives Botswana's reading curriculum are pitched at a much higher level than the reading activities that are actually given to the pupils.



**A Lack of Challenges at Higher Skill Levels?**

It was also important to compare the pupil’s achievement during SACMEQ II project with the expected reading levels of the specific objectives and pupil’s activities in order to shed some light in the patterns of the results shown in Table 7.1. In Table 7.2 it may be seen from the fourth column of information that the pupils’ achievements were spread across each broad group of the SACMEQ II reading skills levels. The greatest concentration of these was located at the second group of the SACMEQ II reading skills levels: “Working within the text”.

However, what was very worrying in Table 7.2 was that although over one quarter of Botswana’s Grade 6 pupils (26.7 percent) were operating at the level of the highest



group: “working beyond the text” – only 13.0 percent of pupil activities were located at this higher level. In this result we have a second worrying discrepancy. It suggests that the most able Grade 6 pupil in Botswana might not be sufficiently challenged by activities that were associated with higher level reading skills. Note here also that a very large percentage (42.6 percent) of the pupil reading activities were located within the lowest groups – while only 26.2 percent of Botswana’s Grade pupils were reading at this lowest level.

**Table 7.2: Percentages of the Specific Objectives, the Reading Comprehension Activities in the Pupil’s Reader and Pupils Reading Achievement in SACMEQ II for each SACMEQ Reading Level.**

	<b>Specific Objectives</b>	<b>Pupils’ Reading Activities</b>	<b>Pupils’ Achievements</b>
<b>SACMEQ II Levels</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Mechanical Foundation Skills</b>	<b>25.0</b>	<b>42.6</b>	<b>26.2</b>
Level 1: Pre Reading	3.6	1.9	2.8
Level 2: Emergent Reading	10.7	7.4	7.7
Level 3: Basic Reading	10.7	33.3	15.7
<b>Working within the text</b>	<b>39.3</b>	<b>44.4</b>	<b>47.1</b>
Level 4: Reading for Meaning	28.6	20.4	23.0
Level 5: Interpretive Reading	10.7	24.1	24.1
<b>Working beyond the text</b>	<b>35.7</b>	<b>13.0</b>	<b>26.7</b>
Level 6: Inferential Reading	17.9	13.0	14.0
Level 7: Analytical Reading	7.1	0.0	9.5
Level 8: Critical Reading	10.7	0.0	3.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

## Conclusion

The results of the analysis are clearly indicating that Grade 6 pupils in Botswana are not being given reading tasks that extend their performance to higher skill levels that are expected by the Ministry. In addition, the pupil reading activities are mainly focused on “mechanical foundation skills (42.6 percent) and “working within the text” (44.4 percent). Very few pupil reading activities focused on higher level tasks that require pupils to be “working beyond the text” (13.0 percent).

The current objectives of the Botswana’s reading curriculum are pitched at a much higher level than the reading activities that are actually given to the pupils. The specific objectives were mainly focused on “working within the text” (39.3 percent), and “working beyond the text” (35.7 percent). The least number of the specific objectives were focused on the “mechanical foundation skills” (25.0 percent).

The results of the analysis also suggest that the most able Grade 6 pupils in Botswana were not being sufficiently challenged by activities that are associated with higher level reading skills. A very large percentage (42.6 percent) of pupil reading activities were associated with the mechanical foundation skills - while only 26.2 percent of Botswana’s Grade pupils were reading at this lowest level.

## CHAPTER 8:

### An Agenda for Action: What Concrete Steps can Botswana's Ministry of Education take to Improve Pupil's Reading Skills?

#### Introduction

The findings of this study have indicated that there is need to rethink and review the kinds of reading texts and pupil reading activities used in Botswana at the Grade 6 level in order to bring them into line with specific objectives that are set down for pupils in classrooms. These main issues deserve desired attention.

The first issue was that it is the responsibility of the Ministry of Education to ensure that the teaching activities and materials provide the educational experiences that fully satisfy the Ministry's official specific reading objectives.

The second issue which emerged from the analysis presented in chapter 7 was that there were "gaps" in the activities given to pupils that resulted in them not being given an opportunity to be challenged by "higher order" reading skills (associated with levels 6 to 8 of the SACMEQ research project). These "higher order" reading skills require pupils: to use the text and move beyond the text to infer, analyze, and evaluate information; to put pieces of information from various parts of the text together in order to make comparisons; to evaluate, make inferences, and make assessments; and to make judgments about information and situations.

The third issue - which emerged from the analyses presented in Chapter 6 - was that Grade 6 pupils in Botswana had difficulties in dealing with "expository texts" (in

which writers aim to describe, explain, or otherwise convey factual information or opinion to the reader).

### **How can these three issues be addressed?**

There are two answers to this question that relate to short-term action and long-range action.

#### **(a) Short-term Strategy**

In the short-term there needs to be a review of reading activities that are given to Grade 6 pupils in order to ensure that they are being presented with reading tasks that cover all of the 8 SACMEQ reading levels. This could be achieved by preparing a “Supplement” to the Pupil’s Book that provided additional reading activities that push pupils to work at levels 6 to 8 of the SACMEQ framework. Further, in response to the research findings presented in Chapter 6, these supplementary exercises would need to ensure that sufficient reading tasks gave pupils sound practice in dealing with expository texts.

In Appendix 8.1 an attempt has been made to write some supplementary questions that are (a) focused on the existing texts in the Pupil’s Book, and (b) structured so as to require pupil’s to apply higher level reading skills.

#### **(b) Long-term Strategy**

In the long-term there is a need to review pre-service and in-service teacher training programmes in an effort to improve classroom teaching strategies - especially the teaching instruction directed towards the development of more advanced reading skills. That is, teachers should receive training that includes exposure to expository texts and also requires them to direct their instruction toward “higher order”

reading skills. These training programmes should include an intensive component on the study of hierarchies of reading skills, and also provide teachers with practical experience in designing and developing pupil activities that address higher reading skill levels.

In reviewing pre-service and in-service teacher training programmes, the Ministry of Education should consider the use of the SACMEQ II reading skills classification described in Figure 4.4 to categorise the current English reading objectives. This framework (i) permits educators to examine the objectives from the student's point of view (what the students must know and be able to do in order to achieve a specific objective), (ii) helps educators to consider increasing the possibility of teaching for higher order specific objectives, (iii) shows educators how to see the relationships between knowledge and cognitive processes inherent in the specific objectives, (iv) helps educators to be able to address the "assessment question", and (v) helps educators to see more clearly the consistency (or lack of it) among the stated specific objectives, the classroom teaching strategies used, and learning assessments used (Anderson et al., 2001).

This long-term strategy to improve Grade 6 reading achievement levels in Botswana will require commitment from decision makers and managers in the Ministry of Education to ensure that major changes take place in the attitudes of teachers and teacher educators so as to enable schools to provide successful, satisfying, and challenging learning experiences for all pupils.

### **Agenda for Action by the Ministry of Education**

The four-step Agenda for Action by the Ministry of Education has been proposed below that is aimed at generating a national debate. Officials and decision makers within the Ministry of Education would be expected to take the lead in ensuring that the debate contributes substantial inputs to the area of textbook development, pre-

service training of teachers, and specifications of classroom teaching strategies. Commitment by the decision makers and officials within the Ministry of Education is essential to ensure that the required changes in teaching activities and reading materials are made. The suggested steps are as follows:

**Step 1: Consultations with stakeholders.**

This step will involve consultations and discussions with a range of stakeholders including regional educational officers, Inspectorate officials, teacher educators, curriculum and textbook developers. The discussion should focus on the current specific objectives for English reading, the reading skills that are expected of pupils, classroom teaching strategies, and reading materials.

**Step 2: Review of the existing specifications of classroom teaching strategies.**

This step will involve revisiting the current specifications of classroom teaching strategies, including the reviewing of: guidelines on assessments and homework, guidelines on the development of teaching materials, and textbooks.

**Step 3: Production of supplementary reading activities.**

This step will involve the production of the supplementary reading activities and related guidelines for developing teaching materials and textbooks. In particular, the Ministry of Education should ensure that the Specific Objectives for English are fully satisfied by relevant reading materials and classroom teaching strategies.

Not all of the work involved in the three steps above will demand that the Ministry of Education should “re-invent the wheel”. On the contrary, much can be done to

adapt and strengthen current teaching materials by providing pupils with reading activities that represent challenging higher order reading skill requirements. In Appendix 8.1 a range of examples has been presented which illustrate how to use existing teaching materials in combination with “higher order” tasks to facilitate the transition of pupils towards more advanced levels of reading skills.

#### **Step 4: Review the Pre-service and In-service Teacher Training Programme**

This step will involve revisiting and reviewing the current specifications of pre-service and in-service teacher training programme in line with the changes in classroom teaching strategies and materials. This will include the inclusion of the study of hierarchies of reading skills in the teacher training programme.

#### **The Role of the Ministry of Education in Coordinating the Agenda for Action**

The suggested agenda for action will require major inputs by a number of departments and other stakeholders outside the ministry. The implementation of this agenda will require close co-ordination to ensure that decisions taken by the management of the ministry are implemented, and that the implementation is monitored and evaluated.

The Department of Curriculum Development and Evaluation should take the responsibility for coordination. This department should be given the necessary resources to ensure smooth implementation of the implementation strategy and the monitoring of progress.

#### **Conclusion**

This chapter has presented a proposed agenda for action by the Botswana Ministry of Education in an effort to improve Grade 6 reading achievements. The proposal includes both short-term action (reviewing of pupil's reading activities to include reading tasks that cover all of the 8 SACMEQ reading levels) and long-term action (reviewing of pre-service and in-service training programmes to include the study of reading hierarchies).

Four concrete steps have been suggested; Step 1: consultations with stakeholders, Step 2: review of the existing specifications of classroom teaching strategies, Step 3: production of supplementary reading activities and Step 4: review the Pre-service and In-service Teacher Training Programme.

The role of the Ministry of Education in the coordination of the agenda for action was also defined. The Department of Curriculum Development and Evaluation is the most appropriate to take responsibility for coordinating and should be provided with the required resources.



## **CHAPTER 9:**

### **Conclusion**

#### **Grade 6 Reading Achievements**

Botswana's Grade 6 pupils performed slightly above SACMEQ II average reading score with an average reading score of 521.1. Botswana is one of the SACMEQ countries where Grade 6 girls performed much higher than Grade 6 boys.

Disparities exist in terms of reading achievements across regions of Botswana. In terms of reading achievements Botswana regions can be categorized into three groups: regions performing at SACMEQ II average reading score, regions performing slightly above SACMEQ II average reading score and regions performing well above SACMEQ II average reading score. Grade 6 pupils from Gaborone region performed well above SACMEQ II average. The average reading score for Botswana Grade 6 from Gaborone region (577.2) was extremely high and compared very favourably with average scores achieved for other SACMEQ countries.

#### **Reading Skills that Grade 6 Pupils have Acquired**

The average Botswana Grade 6 pupil has acquired reading competency Levels 1 to 4 (pre reading, emergent reading, basic reading and reading for meaning), and are in the process of acquiring competency Level 5 (interpretive reading). As a result, the average Grade 6 pupil can undertake reading tasks ranging from simple tasks such as locating word for word or matching words to pictures, to complex tasks such as locating, interpreting information, and reading on to join pieces of adjacent information.

### **Reading Skills that Botswana's Grade 6 Pupils are Yet to Acquire**

The average Botswana Grade 6 pupil is yet to acquire reading competency Levels 6 to 8. This means that an average Grade 6 pupil would have difficulties with the reading tasks that are more complex (reading on and reading back through longer texts in order to combine information from various parts of the text so as to make judgments about the author's intentions or purpose beyond text content, analyzing detailed text for underlying message, and combining information from various parts of the text so as to infer writer's purpose, assumptions, personal beliefs).

### **Reading Skills Requirements Addressed in the Upper Primary Syllabus and Teacher's Guide for English Syllabus, Standard Six**

The current upper primary English syllabus and teacher's guide have specific objectives that are addressing the reading skill requirements for Grade 6 English reading. Grade 6 teachers are expected to teach Grade 6 pupils to undertake reading tasks ranging from simple tasks that requires pupils to locate word for word, or match words to pictures, to more complex tasks that requires pupils to locate and process pieces of information from various parts of longer text so as to infer and evaluate the author's assumptions and purpose (reading competency Level 1 to 8).

### **Reading Skills Activities Addressed in the Grade 6 Pupil's Book**

The current English Pupil's Book for Grade 6 does not adequately address their reading skill requirements. The reading comprehension activities contained in the Grade 6 English Pupil's Book expose pupils to reading tasks ranging from simple tasks requiring pupils to match words to pictures, to those tasks that require pupils

to locate and process information from various parts of longer text in order to infer the writer's purpose (reading competency Level 1 to 6). However, these activities are inadequate because they fall short of reading tasks that require pupils to analyse detailed text or extended documents for underlying message, identify writer's motives and personal beliefs in order to understand the main theme, and combine pieces of information from various parts of the text to infer and evaluate the writer's assumptions (reading competency level 7 to 8).

### **Agenda for Action by the Ministry of Education**

An Agenda for Action by the Botswana Ministry of Education has been proposed in an effort to improve Grade 6 reading achievement. This has included proposals for short-term action (reviewing pupil's reading activities to include reading tasks that cover all of the 8 SACMEQ reading levels), and long-term action (reviewing pre-service and in-service training programme to include the study of reading skill hierarchies).

This agenda is expected to generate a national debate. The officials and decision makers within the Ministry of Education are expected to join the debate and take the lead in ensuring that the debate contributes substantial inputs to the area of textbook development, pre-service and in-service training of teachers and more specifications of classroom teaching strategies.

It is also proposed that the Ministry of Education should take four concrete steps in an effort to improve the pupil's reading achievements; Step 1: consultations with stakeholders, Step 2: review of the existing specifications of classroom teaching strategies, Step 3: production of supplementary reading activities and Step 4: review the Pre-service and In-service Teacher Training Programme.

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## Appendices

### Appendix 4.1: The levels of reading competency generated from skills audit

#### **Level 1: Pre Reading (Linked with Level 1 in the Test Blueprint)**

**(a) Skills:** Matches words and pictures involving concrete concepts and everyday objects. Follows short simple written instructions.

#### **(b) Example Test Items**

- locate familiar words in a short (one line) text
- match words to pictures
- follow short and familiar instructions

#### **Level 2: Emergent Reading (Linked with Level 2 in the Test Blueprint)**

**(a) Skills:** Matches words and pictures involving prepositions and abstract concepts; uses cuing systems (by sounding out, using simple sentence structure, and familiar words) to interpret phrases by reading on.

#### **(b) Example Test Items**

- read familiar words and identify some new words
- use simple and familiar prepositions and verbs to interpret new words
- match words and very simple phrases

#### **Level 3: Basic Reading (Linked with Level 3 in the Test Blueprint)**

**(a) Skills:** Interprets meaning (by matching words and phrases, completing a sentence, or matching adjacent words) in a short and simple text by reading on or reading back.

#### **(b) Example Test Items**

- use context and simple sentence structure to match words and short phrases
- use phrases within sentences as units of meaning
- locate adjacent words and information in a sentence

#### **Level 4: Reading for Meaning (Linked with Level 4 in the Test Blueprint)**

**(a) Skills:** Reads on or reads back in order to link and interpret information located in various parts of the text.

#### **(b) Example Test Items**

- interpret sentence and paragraph level texts
- match phrases across sentences
- read forwards and backwards in order to locate information in longer texts

#### **Level 5: Interpretive Reading (Linked with Level 5 in the Test Blueprint)**

**(a) Skills:** Reads on and reads back in order to combine and interpret information from various parts of the text in association with external information (based on recalled factual knowledge) that “completes” and contextualizes meaning.

**(b) Example Test Items**

- locate, interpret, and read forward to join two pieces of adjacent information
- use multiple pieces of information to interpret general purpose of a document
- paraphrase and interpret a single non-adjacent piece of information

**Level 6: Inferential Reading (Linked with Level 5 in the Test Blueprint)**

**(a) Skills:** Reads on and reads back through longer texts (narrative, document or expository) in order to combine information from various parts of the text so as to infer the writer’s purpose.

**(b) Example Test Items**

- interpret, and make inferences from, different types of texts by reading backwards and forwards to confirm links between widely separated information pieces
- extract information from a non-traditional (left to right) document
- make judgments about an author's intentions or purpose beyond the text content

**Level 7: Analytical Reading (Linked with Level 5 in the Test Blueprint)**

**(a) Skills:** Locates information in longer texts (narrative, document or expository) by reading on and reading back in order to combine information from various parts of the text so as to infer the writer’s personal beliefs (value systems, prejudices, and/or biases).

**(b) Example Test Items**

- combine several pieces of information from a range of locations in complex and lexically dense text or documents
- analyse detailed text or extended documents for an underlying message
- identify meaning from different styles of writing

**Level 8: Critical Reading (A New Level Generated from the Skills Audit)**

**(a) Skills:** Locates information in a longer texts (narrative, document or expository) by reading on and reading back in order to combine information from various parts of the text so as to infer and evaluate what the writer has assumed about both the topic and the characteristics of the reader – such as age, knowledge, and personal beliefs (value systems, prejudices, and/or biases).

**(b) Example Test Items**

- use text structure and organisation to identify an author's assumptions and purposes
- identify an author's motives, biases, beliefs in order to understand the main theme
- link text to establish multiple meanings including analogy and allegory



## Appendix 6.1: SACMEQ II Reading Test Items Considered to be Central to the Core Curriculum in Botswana

Item Number	Item Type	Difficulty Level	Level of Competence	Skill Required to get the correct answer	Percentage of pupils with correct answer	Item central to curriculum
80	Expository	2.158	8	Locate information, reads on and reads back to link words and phrases in order to analyse and infer.	7.1	No
52	Expository	1.544	7	Locate information, reads on and reads back to identify words and phrases with similar meaning and combine information to identify meaning.	11.2	Yes
51	Expository	1.22	7	Locate information, reads on and reads back to identify words and phrases with similar meaning and combine information to identify meaning.	16	Yes
82	Expository	1.161	7	Analyses detailed text for an underlying message	19	Yes
47	Narrative	1.034	7	Locate information, reads on and reads back to identify words and phrases with similar meaning and combine information to identify meaning.	23.5	Yes
49	Narrative	0.539	6	Makes judgment about the author's intention beyond the text	25.8	Yes
13	Sentence completion with a phrase	0.291	6	Interprets and make inferences from pieces of information by reading backwards and forwards to confirm links	30.3	Yes
31	Expository	0.427	6	Makes a judgment about the author' intention beyond the text content.	31.7	No
53	Expository	0.62	6	Reads forwards and backwards in order to combine in formation about how Indian Tailor Bird make	32.2	Yes

Item Number	Item Type	Difficulty Level	Level of Competence	Skill Required to get the correct answer	Percentage of pupils with correct answer	Item central to curriculum
16	Narrative	0.395	6	its nest from various parts of the text and confirms what the different items are used for Reads on and reads back through the text in order to combine information about Tembo's village from various parts of the text so as to locate Tembo's village	32.6	Yes
57	Document	0.664	6	Reads backwards and forwards in order to combine various pieces of information and be clear about the purpose And then locate the farm on the map, confirm the north direction, moves in the north direction until the first cross roads, at the cross roads turn left and move until the first corner and stop. Confirms the name of the place and match with the list of places given as answers	32.9	Yes
68	Expository	0.223	5	Locates, interprets and reads forward to join pieces of adjacent information about the age of the wood	34.8	No
27	Document	0.052	5	Uses the phrase running away with 20 million pulas as a unit of meaning and matches with another phrase with the same meaning	35.2	Yes
72	Expository	0.453	6	Examines and interprets information related to different pictures and words in a non-traditional (comic strip) instructional document, and then make a judgment about the purpose of a particular instruction made by the author.	36.5	Yes

Item Number	Item Type	Difficulty Level	Level of Competence	Skill Required to get the correct answer	Percentage of pupils with correct answer	Item central to curriculum
77	Expository	0.275	6	Reads on and reads back through the text to combine information about what causes teeth to go bad from various parts of the text in order to make inferences	37.3	Yes
60	Expository	0.147	5	Locates, interprets and reads forward to join pieces of adjacent information about why a Walrus needs its eye teeth. (“defend itself” and “attacked by a polar bear”)	38.9	Yes
30	Expository	-0.026	5	Locates, interprets and reads forward to join pieces of adjacent information about processing of oranges	39.3	Yes
17	Narrative	-0.05	5	Locates and interprets information about the forest and read forwards to join pieces of adjacent (“too far away” and “to see”)	39.4	Yes
81	Expository	-0.006	5	Locates, interprets and reads forward to join pieces of adjacent information about Nicotine.	39.6	No
14	Sentence completion with a phrase	-0.345	4	Matches the phrase “very fond of children” with a phrase that has the same meaning in another sentence.	39.9	No
66	Expository	0.325	6	Interprets, and makes inferences from different types of texts by reading backwards and forwards to confirm links between widely separated information pieces	40	Yes
26	Document	-0.099	5	Locates, interprets and reads forward to join pieces of adjacent information about the wanted man’s common name.	42.2	Yes
29	Expository	0.08	5	Locates, interprets and reads forward to join pieces of adjacent information about	42.3	Yes

Item Number	Item Type	Difficulty Level	Level of Competence	Skill Required to get the correct answer	Percentage of pupils with correct answer	Item central to curriculum
71	Expository	0.174	5	packaging of oranges. Locates, interprets and reads forward to join pieces of adjacent information about photographing	42.5	Yes
64	Narrative	-0.081	5	Locates, interprets and reads forward to join pieces of adjacent information about street markets ("In street markets" and "get their supplies there")	44	Yes
19	Document	0.21	5	Locates, interprets and reads forward to join pieces of adjacent information about lessons and days on the time table.	45	Yes
63	Narrative	-0.245	5	Locates, interprets and reads forward to join pieces of adjacent information about street markets ("goods are cheaper" and people prefer to get their supplies there")	45.6	Yes
79	Expository	-0.198	5	Locates, interprets and reads forward to join pieces of information from various parts of the text in association with external information	46.7	Yes
75	Document	-0.127	5	Locates, interprets and reads forward to join pieces of adjacent prices information in the advertisement And then compares prices for different items to identify the most expensive	47.3	Yes
67	Expository	0.109	5	Locates, interprets and reads forward to join pieces of adjacent information about Heartwood	47.8	Yes
83	Expository	-0.102	5	Uses multiple pieces of information about smoking to interpret general purpose of the document	47.8	No
10	Sentence	-0.55	4	Links information from the	50.3	Yes

Item Number	Item Type	Difficulty Level	Level of Competence	Skill Required to get the correct answer	Percentage of pupils with correct answer	Item central to curriculum
11	Sentence completion with a word	-0.495	4	phrase "two years older than John" to "John was 10 years old" And then match the age that is correct for Nelson to complete the sentence by interpreting information located in various parts of the text.	50.8	No
20	Document	-0.504	4	Links information from the phrase "go home with Aunt Mary" to "Aunt Mary has three children" And then reads on or reads back in order to interpret information about Aunt Mary's children located in various parts of the text	50.8	Yes
59	Expository	-0.188	5	Reads on and reads back in order to link information about Maria's lessons located in various parts of the time table.	51.1	Yes
22	Narrative	0.302	6	Locates, interprets and reads forward to join pieces of adjacent information about what a Walrus eat. ("kill a seal" and "eat it")	53.2	Yes
65	Expository	-0.459	4	Reads on and reads back through the text to combine information about people in the story from various parts of the text in order to get their number.	53.5	Yes
32	Expository	-0.541	4	Matches the phrase "the age of a tree" in the question with the phrase "how old the tree is" in the text And use text immediately adjacent to it by reading back Reads forwards and backwards in order to locate information about picking	56.7	Yes

Item Number	Item Type	Difficulty Level	Level of Competence	Skill Required to get the correct answer	Percentage of pupils with correct answer	Item central to curriculum
56	Document	-0.32	5	Locates the town and the park on the map and then Starts from town and move towards the park and confirms the direction	57.4	Yes
48	Narrative	-0.847	4	Matches the phrase "never again did the elephant return" with a phrase with same meaning	58.2	Yes
12	Sentence completion with a phrase	-0.083	4	Reads on or reads back to link and interpret information about George's father "worked in South Africa" and George's mother "wanted to go there someday" to know what happened	60	Yes
9	Sentence completion with a word	-1.245	3	Uses information from the phrase "the oldest is a girl" to match the suitable name for a girl to complete the sentence by reading on and back	61.3	No
25	Narrative	-0.741	4	Reads forwards and backwards in order to locate information about why everybody was pleased.	61.9	Yes
61	Narrative	-0.597	4	Reads on to link and interpret information about the market located in various parts of the text	62	Yes
76	Document	-0.627	4	Matches the phrase "twelve year old"" in the question with the phrase "11-14 years" in the text	62.1	Yes
15	Narrative	-0.791	4	And use text immediately adjacent to it by reading on Matches the phrase "make out" with a word that has the same meaning in another sentence.	62.3	Yes
44	Expository	-1.019	3	Locates adjacent information	64.6	Yes

Item Number	Item Type	Difficulty Level	Level of Competence	Skill Required to get the correct answer	Percentage of pupils with correct answer	Item central to curriculum
37	Document	-1.092	3	about controlling population in a sentence Uses phrases within a sentence as a unit of meaning	64.9	Yes
38	Document	-0.686	4	Reads forwards and backwards in order to locate in formation about the competition.	65.3	Yes
33	Document	-0.199	5	Locates, interprets and reads forward to join pieces of adjacent information about the concert programme.	65.4	Yes
23	Narrative	-0.393	4	Reads forwards and backwards in order to locate in formation about the first activity after they woke up	65.6	Yes
28	Document	-1.057	3	Uses the context of stealing to match phrases about police reports.	65.7	Yes
45	Narrative	-1.049	3	Matches the phrase "large tree grew" with the phrase "large tree grow" and then Locates adjacent information about the where the large tree grow in the sentence by reading on	67.1	Yes
39	Document	-0.807	4	Reads forwards and backwards in order to locate in formation about the competition.	68.8	Yes
54	Document	-1.16	3	Locates the swamp in the map and then Locates the places immediately adjacent to the swamp and match the place name with the list given as answers	68.9	Yes
35	Document	-1.259	3	Uses phrases within a sentence as a unit of meaning.	69.1	Yes
36	Document	-0.96	3	Uses phrases within a sentence as a unit of meaning	70.2	Yes
18	Document	-0.792	4	Matches the day and the	70.4	Yes

Item Number	Item Type	Difficulty Level	Level of Competence	Skill Required to get the correct answer	Percentage of pupils with correct answer	Item central to curriculum
7	Sentence completion with a word	-1.545	2	lesson number to locate the third lesson on Thursday. Uses the verb "rain" to interpret the word that illustrate the meaning of the outcome of rain by reading on	70.5	Yes
8	Sentence completion with a word	-1.252	3	Uses context of the phrase "Aunt Mary's house" to match the best word to complete the sentence by reading on and back.	70.7	Yes
42	Expository	-0.878	4	Reads forwards and backwards in order to locate in formation about the population of Malawi.	71.3	Yes
34	Document	-0.971	3	Locates adjacent items in the concert programme.	71.8	Yes
24	Narrative	-1.309	3	Locates adjacent words and information about Tom and Sarah did after breakfast.	72.9	Yes
70	Expository	-1.098	3	Uses the phrase "take a photo" in the question as a unit of meaning and matches it with the phrase with a similar meaning "photographing" and Locate adjacent information about the person's position by reading on	74.6	Yes
41	Expository	-1.307	3	Locates adjacent information about population in a sentence	75.4	Yes
73	Document	-0.895	3	Uses context to match the phrase "jackets and trousers" in the question with the phrase "jackets and trousers" in the advertisement And then match adjacent text "2-6 years" in the text with the text "2-6 year olds" in the list given as answers by reading on	75.7	Yes



Item Number	Item Type	Difficulty Level	Level of Competence	Skill Required to get the correct answer	Percentage of pupils with correct answer	Item central to curriculum
58	Expository	-1.777	1	Locates the word "cold" in the text and Matches with the word "cold" in the list of sentences given as answers.	77.6	Yes
62	Narrative	-1.603	2	Matches the word "starts" in the question to the word with similar meaning "open" in the text and then Uses the text immediately adjacent to it by reading on	77.8	Yes
74	Document	-1.118	3	Uses context to match the words "running shoes" and "sandals" in the question with the words "running shoes" and "sandals" in the advertisement And then match adjacent text "3-8 years" in the text with the text "3-8 year olds" in the list given as answers by reading on	78.3	Yes
46	Narrative	-1.584	2	Matches the phrase "Elephant came by" with "animal came by" and then Locate the animal that came by reading backwards	78.9	Yes
50	Expository	-1.634	2	Matches the word "thread" in the question to the word "thread" in the text and then Uses the text immediately adjacent to it by reading on	79.2	Yes
40	Document	-1.487	2	Matches very simple phrases about the competition.	79.7	Yes
4	Word recognition	-2.123	1	Matches the words "chair" and "table" with the two items in each diagram And then matches the words "on the top" with the diagram that illustrates the meaning of the words.	79.9	Yes
3	Word recognition	-1.895	1	Matches the words "cross" and "circle" with the two	80.1	Yes

Item Number	Item Type	Difficulty Level	Level of Competence	Skill Required to get the correct answer	Percentage of pupils with correct answer	Item central to curriculum
21	Document	-1.197	3	Locates the day and counts Maria's lessons during that day.	81.4	Yes
1	Word recognition	-2.726	1	Matches the word "horse" with the picture and the diagram that best illustrates resemblance of the face of a horse.	92.6	Yes
5	Word recognition	-3.744	1	Matches the word "arrow" with the item in each diagram And then matches the words "pointing up" with the diagram that illustrates the meaning of the words.	95.3	Yes
6	Word recognition	-3.065	1	Matches the word "tree" with the pictures in each diagram And then matches the words "two" with the diagram that illustrates the meaning of the word.	96.1	Yes
2	Word recognition	-4.124	1	Matches the word "ball" with the picture in each diagram And then matches the word "biggest" with the diagram that illustrates the meaning of the word.	96.6	Yes

## **Appendix 7.1: Objectives of Basic Education Curriculum**

The specific objectives of the current basic education curriculum as outlined in the Curriculum Blueprint (Ministry of Education, 2004, p.4) are:

- (a) Produce a literate and numerate population that can be successful at home and work
- (a) Serve as a foundation for further education
- (b) Enable learners to be healthier and more able to cope with every day life challenges
- (c) Contribute to the development of satisfactory home and family life
- (d) Develop competence and ability to change conditions for the better
- (e) Enable individuals to apply content learned and attitudes developed to practical situations in real life through the development of pre-vocational knowledge and manipulative skills.
- (f) Develop individuals who have the ability to cope with and face radically different economic futures
- (g) Inculcate in students the desire to conserve and preserve a finite environment and resources from dangers of exploitation, waste and pollution
- (h) Develop individuals who have the ability to understand, control and manage a revolution in communication and technology which has the potential for controlling mankind as well as serving it
- (i) Develop an understanding of the importance of preserving and strengthening moral, cultural and spiritual values that are in danger of being unacceptably weakened and eroded

## **Appendix 7.2: Expected Outcomes of Primary Education Curriculum**

The Expected outcomes of the current Primary Education curriculum as outlined in the Curriculum Blueprint (Ministry of Education, 2004, p.6) are:

- (a) Acquired language skills to enable self appropriate expression in English and Setswana as tools of communication as well as learning
- (a) Developed desirable attributes including curiosity, creativity, assertiveness, self-esteem, open-mindedness, respect for the environment and one's own life
- (b) Developed awareness of the interrelationship between Science, Technology and Society in everyday life
- (c) Developed desirable attributes towards and appreciation for different types of work and the ability to assess personal capabilities/weaknesses and achievement
- (d) Acquired knowledge, skills in and appropriate attitudes towards food production and industrial arts
- (e) Acquired knowledge and understanding of their society through appreciation of their culture and tradition
- (f) Developed skills such as numeracy literacy, communication, adaptability and problem solving for further learning and vocational preparation
- (g) Acquired critical thinking, problem solving and inquiry skills
- (h) Developed competence and confidence in the application of computational skills in order to solve day to day problems
- (i) Developed awareness and appreciation of the use of computers in every day life
- (j) Developed awareness and appreciation of basic entrepreneurial skills in business and everyday commercial transactions

- (k) Developed ability to recognize and appreciate the contribution of religion in the formation of values and behavior patterns
- (l) Developed awareness of their rights and responsibilities related to health, gender, law, violence, identity, civic and other social and moral issues
- (m) Developed their own special interests, talents and skills whether these be dexterity, physical strength, intellectual ability, and/or artistic gifts

**Appendix 7.3: Specific Objectives for Grade 6 English Syllabus**  
**(Reading)**

The specific objectives of the current Grade 6 English reading Syllabus extracted from the Syllabus Grid (Ministry of Education, 2004, p.11) are:

OBJ1. Follow a set of written instructions on how to carry out a process, or play a game

OBJ2. Follow written directions from any point in the village/town to school

OBJ3. Determine the main points from a written passage

OBJ4. Use a dictionary to find the meaning of unfamiliar words

OBJ5. Read to get information about specific countries, places and people

OBJ6. Recognize odd words from text read

OBJ7. Relate pictorial information to written text

OBJ8. Identify specific details on, main points from, and form opinion about news read

OBJ9. Establish preferences for specific books and authors

OBJ10. Follow events of a story/drama read

OBJ11. Determine mood and emotions in a poem

OBJ12. Identify characters in a poem

OBJ13. Determine setting in a poem

OBJ14. Use a telephone directory to locate telephone numbers

OBJ15. Use glossary to determine the meaning of peculiar words and phrases

OBJ16. Extract information from encyclopedia on different subjects

OBJ17. Read widely for interest and enjoyment

OBJ18. Distinguish between different genres

OBJ19. Read for general information and knowledge

## **Appendix 7.4: Specific Objectives in the Teacher's Guide for Grade 6 English Syllabus (Reading)**

The specific objectives in the Teacher's Guide for Grade 6 English Syllabus (Reading) extracted from the Teacher's Guide for English Syllabus Standard 6 (Ministry of Education, 2005, p.4) are:

TGUIDE1. Read independently (within a basic vocabulary level of 2000 words), diverse reading materials for information and pleasure

TGUIDE2. Draw logical conclusion using varied graphic sources of information

TGUIDE3. Read and understand a variety of basic printed mater used in everyday communication

TGUIDE4. Deduce the meaning of more difficult words in context

TGUIDE5. Examine and assess information in a variety of written text in order to make inferences and form judgments

TGUIDE6. Read critically to understand both the gist and specific details of the text read

TGUIDE7. Combine different pieces of information in a text in order to understand the whole message

TGUIDE8. Guess what could happen in a story if circumstances change

TGUIDE9. Differentiate between fact and opinion in a variety of text



## Appendix 7.5: Specific Reading Activity Items in Grade 6 English

### Reading Materials

The specific reading activity items of the current Grade 6 English reading material extracted from different chapters of the Standard 6 English Pupil’s book (Clohessy, Ratsoma, and Mathole, 2006) are:

<b>Unit and Activity</b>	<b>Detailed Skills Audit</b>	<b>SACMEQ II Level</b>
<b>Unit 2: Passages (Activity 2.1 page 23)</b>		
PASS1. Was the writer traveling alone?	Read on, locate the “we stopped” and use the phrase to make out the answer	Level 3: Basic reading
PASS2. What did the writer feel about the countryside before getting out of the car?	Read on, locate the phrase “looked barren, dry and lifeless” and use the phrase to make out the answer.	Level 3: Basic reading
PASS3. What activities did the writer discover after getting out the car?	Read on, locate the word “discover” then use the information adjacent.	Level 3: Basic reading
PASS4. Who was carrying out these activities?	Read on, locate phrases “flowers nestling” and “ant lion scooping” and use the phrases to make out answer.	Level 3: Basic reading
PASS5. What was the writer’s opinion about what he saw?	Read on, locate the word “discover” then use the word immediately adjacent.	Level 3: Basic reading
PASS6. What is the main point of this passage?	Read on and read back, locate and combine phrases in order to interpret the main point of the document.	Level 5: Interpretive reading
PASS7. Identify the specific details of the passage.	Read on and read back in order to locate and interpret information and identify specific details.	Level 4: Reading for meaning
PASS8. Do you think this passage was written mainly to inform or entertain?	Read on and read back, locate and combine phrases in order to interpret the main purpose of the document.	Level 5: Interpretive reading
PASS9. Who might find this passage interesting? Why?	Read on and read back, locate and combine phrases in order to interpret the main purpose of the document.	Level 5: Interpretive reading
PASS10. Try to work out what the underlined words mean in the context of the passage and then look them up in the dictionary to see if you were correct.	Use familiar prepositions and verbs to make out meaning of the underlined words.	Level 2: Emergent reading
<b>Unit 2: Passages (Activity 2.4 page 26)</b>		
PASS11. What is the main point of the passage?	Read on and read back, locate and combine phrases in order to interpret the	Level 5: Interpretive reading

<b>Unit and Activity</b>	<b>Detailed Skills Audit</b>	<b>SACMEQ II Level</b>
	main point of the document.	
PASS12. How many people are mentioned in the passage?	Read on to locate the names and count.	Level 3: Basic reading
PASS13. How many sentences are used as specific details?	Read on to locate the sentences with details and count	Level 3: Basic reading
PASS14. Are the details given as meaning?	Read on to locate and interpret sentences	Level 4: Reading for meaning
<b>Unit 3: Directions (Activity 3.7 page 46)</b>		
DIR1. Read the directions Abotle followed and identify the place he went to.	Read on and back in order to link and interpret the directions Abotle followed.	Level 4: Reading for meaning
<b>Unit 3: Reference skills (Activity 3.9 page 48)</b>		
REF1. Arrange the following places and names of telephone subscribers in alphabetical order.	Read on to locate and sort the list	Level 4: Reading for meaning
REF2. What is the name of the telephone company?	Read on to locate and match	Level 3: Basic reading
REF3. Identify the different sections of the telephone directory	Read on and back to locate information	Level 4: Reading for meaning
REF4. List the emergency telephone numbers and which service they provide	Read on to locate emergency telephone numbers and adjacent information	Level 3: Basic reading
REF5. Find the following villages in the telephone directory.	Locate names and match	Level 2: Emergent reading
REF6. Give the telephone numbers of subscribers in Moroka whose names begin with letter N.	Locate names and match	Level 2: Emergent reading
<b>Unit 4: Stories (Activity 4.2 page 52)</b>		
STOR1. What do you think is happening in the picture?	Interpret picture	Level 5: Interpretive reading
STOR2. Imagine you were the hare. Describe how you would feel if you saw the leopard?	Infer from the picture	Level 6: Inferential reading
STOR3. What do you think is going to happen next?	Predict from the picture	Level 6: Inferential reading
<b>Unit 4: Stories (Activity 4.3 page 53)</b>		
STOR4. Where does this story take place?	Match the words in various answer options to the picture in the story.	Level 1: Pre reading
STOR5. Who are the characters in the story?	Match words and phrases to make out characters	Level 2: Emergent reading
STOR6. Why did Nogwaja fail to teach Leopard a lesson?	Reads on and reads back, locate and match phrases across sentences	Level 4: Reading for meaning
STOR7. What was the terrible	Reads on and reads back, locate and	Level 4: Reading for

<b>Unit and Activity</b>	<b>Detailed Skills Audit</b>	<b>SACMEQ II Level</b>
mistake Nogwaja made?	match phrases across sentences	meaning
STOR8. What is the moral of the story?	Read on and read back, locate and combine phrases in order to make out the moral of the story.	Level 5: Interpretive reading
<b>Unit 5: News Reports (Activity 5.1 page 62)</b>		
NEWS1. Read the report and identify the main points	Read on and read back in order to locate and interpret information and identify main points.	Level 4: Reading for meaning
<b>Unit 5: News Reports (Activity 5.2 page 63)</b>		
NEWS2. State the main points in the news report	Read on and read back, locate and combine phrases in order to interpret the main point of the news report.	Level 5: Interpretive reading
NEWS3. What is your opinion about the bank robbery?	Read on and read back, locate and combine information in order to interpret so as to make an opinion.	Level 5: Interpretive reading
<b>Unit 5: News Reports (Activity 5.4 page 65)</b>		
NEWS4. What is the report about?	Read on and read back, locate and combine information in order to interpret the general purpose of the report.	Level 5: Interpretive reading
NEWS5. What are the main points of the report?	Read on and read back, locate and combine information in order to interpret the main points of the report.	Level 5: Interpretive reading
NEWS6. What are the specific details of the report?	Read on and read back in order to locate and interpret information and identify specific details.	Level 4: Reading for meaning
NEWS7. Why are so many children in need of help?	Reads on and back in order to combine and interpret information in association with external information	Level 5: Interpretive reading
NEWS8. How does the foster mother manage to take care of the children?	Read on and read back, locate and combine information in order to interpret	Level 5: Interpretive reading
NEWS9. What are the ages of the children she cares for?	Locate adjacent words and information in a sentence	Level 3: Basic reading
NEWS10. How many children visit the foster home on daily basis?	Locate adjacent words and information in a sentence	Level 3: Basic reading
NEWS11. Where do the children get their education?	Locate adjacent words and information in a sentence	Level 3: Basic reading
NEWS12. What does the foster mother have in common with the children? When did she find that out?	Reads on and back in order to link and interpret information located in various parts of the text	Level 4: Reading for meaning
<b>Unit 7: Poetry (Activity 7.1 page 78)</b>		
POEM1. What is the message of this poem	Read on and read back in order to combine information from different parts of the text and make judgment beyond	Level 6: Inferential reading

<b>Unit and Activity</b>	<b>Detailed Skills Audit</b>	<b>SACMEQ II Level</b>
	the text content.	
POEM2. Something is being chased away in the poem. What is it?	Locate adjacent word and information in a sentence	Level 3: Basic reading
POEM3. Something is being chased away in the poem. Why is it being chased away?	Locate adjacent word and information in a sentence	Level 3: Basic reading
POEM4. Who would like to play?	Locate adjacent word and information in a sentence	Level 3: Basic reading
POEM5. What is stopping him from playing?	Read on and back in order to link and interpret information	Level 4: Reading for meaning
<b>Unit 7: Poetry (Activity 7.2 page 79)</b>		
POEM6. Who are the characters in this poem?	Read on to locate names of characters	Level 3: Basic reading
POEM7. What do you think Mr Dlamini said to his wife and children after the chair broke?	Read on and read back in order to combine information from different parts of the text and make judgment beyond the text content.	Level 6: Inferential reading
POEM8. Do you think this people lived in town or a village?	Read on and read back in order to combine information from different parts of the text and make judgment beyond the text content.	Level 6: Inferential reading
POEM9. How do you think Mr Dlamini and his wife and children felt when they had no food?	Read on and read back in order to combine information from different parts of the text and make judgment beyond the text content.	Level 6: Inferential reading
POEM10. Why did the chair break?	Read on and back to link and interpret information	Level 4: Reading for meaning
POEM11. Why do you think Mr Mkwezi made such a bad chair?	Read on and back to link and interpret information	Level 4: Reading for meaning
POEM12. What have you learnt from this poem?	Read on and read back, locate and combine information in order to interpret	Level 5: Interpretive reading
POEM13. What title would you give the poem?	Read on and read back in order to combine information from different parts of the text in order make out title	Level 6: Inferential reading

## Appendix 8.1: Examples of Suggested Reading Comprehension Activities for Skill Levels 6 to 8

The current Grade 6 English reading material can be improved by providing additional or supplementary reading activities that will engage Grade 6 pupils in reading tasks that will develop higher levels of competence using the current Grade 6 reading material.

In the following discussion examples of suggested reading activities under each Unit of the Grade 6 English Pupils' Book have been presented and analysed in order to demonstrate how to gain a better understanding of the "cognitive steps" that are addressed by the reading activity.

### Passages

#### **A Drive Through Botswana**

When driving through Botswana to visit my daughter and her family in Orapa, I would sometimes think that there was no life in the hot dry countryside. It looked barren, dry and lifeless. However, when we stopped the car and got out to stretch our legs, we would discover beautiful desert flowers nestling among the rocks, or ant lions scooping out the sand to make tunnels for unsuspecting insects to fall into and become their dinner. We would watch the weaver birds flying great distances to get the various things to build their big untidy nest on the telephone poles. These things made me realize that this is a country of hidden beauty and interest. (extracted from Clohessy, Ratsoma, and Mathole, 2006, p.23)

#### **(a) Example of Level 6 Question:**

Why is the nest of the weaver bird untidy?

- A. Built with various things
- B. Built on the telephone poles
- C. The nest is big
- D. The nest is weaved

In this example, pupils are required to read on and back to make judgments about the author's intentions or purpose beyond the text content.

**(b) Example of Level 7 Question:**

The weaver bird flew great distances to get the various things because ....

- A. It was hot
- B. It was dry
- C. Plants were destroyed
- D. The car was moving

In this example, pupils are required to identify meaning from different styles of writing.

**(c) Example of level 8 Question:**

The beauty of the country is hidden because ....

- A. It is hot
- B. It is dry
- C. Conditions are harsh
- D. There is no life

In this example, pupils are required to identify the author's motives, biases and beliefs in order to understand the main theme.

**Stories**

**(a) Example of Level 7 Question:**

The golden colour coat was invisible during the day because it was....

- A. beautiful
- B. like gleaming gold
- C. the colour of grass
- D. from the greatest one

In this example, pupils are required to identify meaning from different styles of writing.

**(b) Example of level 8 Question:**

Leopard was trying not to sound interested because ....

- A. He was hungry
- B. Nogwaja was sly
- C. Nogwaja was clever
- D. He did not trust Nogwaja

In this example, pupils are required to identify the author's motives, biases and beliefs in order to understand the main theme.

**Leopard's Spotted Coat**

19. When the greatest one first made the world, Leopard was given a beautiful golden yellow coat, the colour of grass. So he was able to stalk his prey during the day, stealthily creeping through the long grass.
20. Nogwaja the hare, who is small, was sunning himself one day and did not see Leopard stalking him. He was nearly caught by Leopard. Although he got away, he was very angry and decided to teach Leopard a lesson.
21. But Nogwaja had to think of a clever plan that would trick Leopard. All that night he thought and thought. At last he came up with a plan.
22. The next morning Nogwaja waited at the waterhole for Leopard to come for his drink. When Leopard came, he was very thirsty and very hungry, as he had not eaten all night.
23. Nogwaja came out of his hiding place and said, "Good morning Leopard. I hope you have eaten well?"
24. Leopard was not in a good mood, because he was hungry, so he just growled deep in his throat.
25. "I have eaten very well!" said Nogwaja. "Of course I find it easy to get food. My colour helps me. I am invisible at night.. No one sees me when I run across a field. It is a pity your golden coat shows up so well in the moonlight. Of course I wouldn't dream of trying to advise such a wise animal as you are but ... " Nogwaja paused and looked at Leopard.
26. Leopard knew that Nowaja was sly, but he also knew he was clever.. Should he trust him? It was true that his yellow coat made him invisible during the day, but it showed up like gleaming gold during the night.
27. "What do you suggest, Nogwaja?" asked Leopard, trying not to sound too interested.
28. Nogwaja knew that the smaller plains beyond the hills had just had a great fire and that in some places the grass roots were still burning.
29. "Follow me," Nogwaja said, "I will show you."
30. "Keeping as far away from Leopard as he could, Nogwaja led him to where the fire had been.
31. "You see the grey ash, Leopard? You must roll on it. Mind you," added Nogwaja slyly, "I'm sure that you are brave enough to do it. Only a very brave animal can change the colour of his coat!"
32. Leopard snarled, "You think I, Leopard, am a coward?"
33. With that he leapt on to the burnt grass. A sharp pain shot through his paws as the glowing roots clung to his paws. With a roar of pain, he rolled onto his back to cool his paws, only to find that the burning grass roots bit deep into his yellow coat.
34. Nogwaja sat and watched him and smiled and smiled.
35. But when Leopard stood up and started towards Nogwaja to punish him, Nogwaja saw that wherever the fire had left a black mark on Leopard's coat, the dappled light of the moon would make him invisible. Nogwaja stood up and ran home to his hole behind the rocks as fast as he possibly could.
36. He had made a terrible mistake. As a result of his advice, Leopard could now hunt at night as well as during the day. (extracted from Clohessy, Ratsoma, and Mathole, 2006, p.53)

## **News Reports**

### **A light to the children**

The Midweek Sun, May 11 2005, by Lesego Kgomonyane

Keneilwe (7) arrives at her foster home. Her face brightens as she sees her foster mother. She joins the rest of the kids playing hide and seek outside. The foster mother shares her daily struggles with the Midweek Sun team. "It is challenging to look after 40 orphans living with HIV and AIDS without proper income," says the softly spoken mother of two, who is herself HIV positive.

"I love these kids and treat them like my own. I cannot fail them because most of them have been abandoned by either their relatives or rejected by orphanages," she says from her home, which she has turned into a foster home.

She was diagnosed with HIV 15 years ago and has two children of her own, but is a foster mother to almost 80 children. With no job she relies on donors and what little she makes from her taxi business for sustenance.

At present she houses 30 children between 7 and 14 years old in her three-bedroom house. The rest come in every morning to spend the day. They are fed and given medication. A 19-year-old serves as a teacher, tutoring the little ones on elementary literacy.

"It is a struggle to give them their daily bread, but I try to make ends meet. They love being here, some cry when I take them to their homes," she says. (extracted from Clohessy, Ratsoma, and Mathole, 2006, p.65)

### **(a) Example of Level 6 Question:**

Children love being in the foster home because they...

- A. Play hide and seek
- B. Stay with a foster mother
- C. Are fed and given medication
- D. Feel safe and loved

In this example, pupils are required to read on and back in order to combine information from various parts of the text so as to infer.

### **(b) Example of Level 7 Question:**

What is your opinion of the news report?

- A. Lots of orphans need help
- B. People living with HIV and AIDS are compassionate
- C. Children abandoned by relatives need homes
- D. HIV and AIDS is a problem



In this example, pupils are required to read on and back in order to combine information from various parts of the text for an underlying message.

**(c) Example of Level 8 Question:**

The foster mother has turned her house into a foster home because ...

- A. She loves children
- B. She is HIV positive
- C. Children love being with her
- D. She is compassionate and caring

In this example, pupils are required to read on and back in order to combine information from various parts of the text to identify the author's motives, biases, and beliefs in order to understand the main theme.

**Poetry**

**Mr Mkwezi's Chair**

Mr. Mkwezi made a chair,  
But didn't use good glue.  
He hammered in some nails and said  
"I'll sell it. That'll do!"

Mr Dlamini bought the chair,  
Fell off and broke his leg.  
He couldn't hoe his field because  
He spent a week in bed

Because he spent a week in bed,  
He couldn't pick the maize  
His wife and children had no food  
For days and days and days.

And so, if you do careless work  
And make things that are bad,  
Trouble comes because of you  
And that is very sad.

And so learn something from this rhyme,  
Take care and make things well.  
Then you'll have customers  
And lots of things to sell. (extracted from Clohessy, Ratsoma, and Mathole,  
2006, p.65)

**(a) Example of Level 7 Question:**

What sentence in the poem shows that Mr Mkwezi did not care about his customers?

- A. But did not use good glue
- B. He hammered in some nails
- C. Trouble comes because of you
- D. "I'll sell it. That'll do!"

In this example, pupils are required to read on and back in order to identify meaning from different styles of writing.

**(b) Example of Level 8 Question:**

Mr Dlamini's wife and children did not work in the field because ...

- A. Mr Dlamini broke his leg
- B. Mr Dlamini spent a week in bed
- C. Mr Dlamini Bought a chair
- D. Women and children do not work in the field

In this example, pupils are required to read on and back in order to use text structure and organisation to identify the author's assumptions and purposes.

**Directions and Instructions**

Based on Activity 3.7 in the English Pupil's Book Standard Six (Clohessy, Ratsoma, and Mathole, 2006, p. 46).

Study the map carefully and then answer the questions.

**(a) Example of Level 6 Question:**

Follow these directions:

- A. Start at the stadium
- B. Go north until the round about
- C. Go around the round about anticlockwise
- D. Exit through the first point
- E. Proceed until first junction to the right
- F. At the junction turn right and stop

Where are you?

In this example, pupils are required to read on and back in order to combine information from various parts of the text so as to infer.

**(b) Example of Level 7 Question:**

Start at the hospital, which is the shortest route to Abotle's home?

In this example, pupils are required to read on and back in order to combine several pieces of information from various parts of the map to writer's personal beliefs and biases.

**(c) Example of Level 8 Question:**

Which three places are connected directly by Collen road?

In this example, pupils are required to read on and back in order to combine several pieces of information from various parts of the map to identify author's assumptions.