

INVESTIGATING AND ESTABLISHING BEST PRACTICES IN  
THE TEACHING OF ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE IN  
UNDER-RESOURCED AND MULTILINGUAL CONTEXTS

REPORT 2

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## SECTION A:

### INTRODUCTION TO THE RESEARCH QUESTION, ITS CONTEXT AND THE RESEARCH APPROACH

*This document reports on the findings of a project which is one of several classroom-based research studies funded by the President's Education Initiative (PEI). The PEI focus is on teacher development and improving the quality of the processes and products of teaching and learning.*

*The project was located in the Teaching and Learning Resources Centre (TLRC) at the University of Cape Town (UCT). Chief concerns of the Centre include those of materials development and provision - especially to teachers in historically disadvantaged and under-resourced schools - and in-service teacher education with a focus on classroom practice. Underlying each of these concerns is the belief that appropriate materials will encourage and support teachers and their practices.*

*The four members in the research team were Patiswa Denga, Kathima Najjaar, Ruth Versfeld and Sharman Wickham. (See Appendix 2 for further information on the research team and management.)*

This section introduces the research question and the objectives of the study. The background to and motivation for the project is described and the research approach is outlined. Finally, the structure of the report is provided.

#### **The research question and objectives**

The question that guided this project is : "In what ways do classroom materials drive teachers' practices?"

In the *fieldwork phase* of the project, data was collected

- to construct inventories of available and frequently used classroom resource types
- to develop profiles of the project schools, the participating teachers and the learners in their project classes
- to write rich descriptions of the ways in which the teachers used classroom materials
- to write descriptions of the ways in which the learners engaged with these materials
- to identify and explain the successes and difficulties teachers face when using texts in their classrooms

Further analytical work aimed to

- develop insights and understandings into the relationship between classroom materials and teaching and learning methodologies
- develop insights and understandings into the ways in which classroom resources can most effectively be used in building language capacity
- provide implications for policy in the area of in-service education, materials development, language and methodology.

### **The context of the study**

In describing and explaining relationships between materials used in classrooms and teaching and learning methodologies, the research team also explored the view that access to good materials improves teachers' practices and enriches learning environments. This view is held by a variety of organisations and individuals in South Africa as well as those in developing and developed countries.

The centrality of the book to education has been well documented, and is stressed "particularly in educationally deprived contexts where educators and learners have less capacity or confidence to venture beyond the safe boundaries of the printed word" (Kromberg 1993 : 4). Brunswic writes that "it is now accepted that pupil access to a school textbook is one criterion for assessing the quality of education, and that the provision of school textbooks is a effective strategy for improving results" (Brunswic et al 1990: 4).

Since 1973 the World Bank has become a world-wide force in creating and promoting systems to provide textbooks in the developing world. Evaluation of forty-eight of the Bank's textbook projects indicate the considerable contribution that textbooks and other instructional materials can make to effective teaching and to improving the quality of education (Verspoor in Farrell & Heynemann 1993: 52).

Even in European countries and the United States of America books are seen to be an indispensable teaching and learning tool. Neumann writes that "books are the main teaching aid in German schools and are likely to remain so for the foreseeable future" (Neumann in Verspoor in Farrell & Heynemann 1993 : 120). He also quotes the French national minister of education who said, "The book remains, in spite of the appearance of newer teaching methods, the principal support of teaching" (Neumann in Verspoor in Farrell & Heynemann 1993 . 121).

The relative importance of teachers and textbooks has been argued for as follows: "Children can learn to read with textbooks and parental assistance, or from peers who know how to read, or from television (consider the `Sesame Street' programme), but without a teacher. Once they know how to read, they can continue to learn from other books, and still without a teacher. Consequently, it is extremely difficult to become competent in reading, which is, next to writing and arithmetic, one of the three fundamental objectives of school, if one never has

access to books. It is the author's opinion that, generally speaking, the relative importance ascribed to different educational inputs puts too much stress on teachers, and neglects far too much the value of recourse to an input with excellent cost-efficiency ratio -- the textbook" (Orive1 in Brunswic et al 1990 : 66).

In 1993, John Samuel, then head of the ANC's Education Desk, described books as the "lifeblood of an education system" (John Samuel in Kromberg 1993 : 9) and a literate public "essential as an expression of equity, as a vehicle for the cultivation of the democratic arts and disciplines, and to enable the pursuit of excellence in all the arts, sciences and technologies which this country needs to heal, civilise and recreate itself" (John Samuel in Kromberg 1993 13). He argued that the availability and quality of books are both very powerful factors in regenerating learning (John Samuel in Kromberg 1993 : 14).

The Generic Guidelines for the Development of Learning Support Materials for Outcomes Based Education and Training (National Department of Education - November 1997) provides a vision of educational transformation in South Africa and highlights the importance of support materials for both learners and teachers. "To bring about the kind of educational transformation the White Paper on Education and Training has outlined, it is of vital importance the availability of quality teaching and learning support materials be taken very seriously. It is clear that poor materials undermine equitable access to education by restricting learners' access (particularly in disadvantaged communities) to the knowledge and understanding, skills and dispositions vital for equitable and felicitous participation in a complex and multi-levelled society" (1997 : 12). With the introduction of Outcomes Based Education and Curriculum 2005 in 1997 in South Africa, a debate about the importance of books has arisen. An extract from *Business Day*, a national newspaper, illustrates the argument:

"Some high level educationists believe Curriculum 2005 should be less reliant on books than the traditional education system. The belief is that outcomes-based education should involve the use of a greater range of resources.

"Nick Taylor, Joint Education Trust executive director, says abandoning textbooks could be disastrous to education in SA.

"It could cause Curriculum 2005 to increase the disparities between the privileged and underprivileged. The good teachers, most of them in more affluent schools, will cope at least adequately if they have to. But the vast majority won't,' he says.

"Prof Joe Muller, head of the School of Education at the University of Cape Town, says world wide experience of outcomes-based education has been that it works well only in well-resourced schools." (13/5/1998)

The debate continues amongst academics, publishers, development agencies and government education departments: Should the focus be on textbook development and provision, or on other resources<sup>1</sup>, or should teachers be encouraged to develop resources themselves? It is interesting to note that those South Africans responsible for financing the education system tend

<sup>1</sup> Other resources would include teachers' manuals, worksheets, newspaper and magazine articles, reference books and audio-visual aids including computers and the internet.

to argue for teacher selected and generated texts, while those who make a living out of producing books tend to follow the textbook option.

Since educational transformation in South Africa involves providing quality education for greater numbers of learners, policy decisions for improvement need to be based on cost-effective strategies.

Before coming to a decision and developing policies for textbooks and other educational resources, it is necessary that research be conducted in classrooms to investigate what resources teachers use, how they use them and whether or not these resources contribute to good teaching practices. At present, "little research exists on how teachers use texts, the effect of textbooks on classroom practice, and the relative importance of the textbook versus other instructional materials in forming student attitudes and in improving the cognitive outcomes of schooling" (Altbach & Kelly 1988 : 13).

This research project is one contribution towards reaching an understanding of the role of texts - defined as printed material - in establishing best practices. It has focused on the teaching of English in under-resourced and multilingual contexts. Further research in other learning areas and at other levels also needs to inform policy on educational resources.

### **The research approach**

The research approach adopted for this project may best be understood as an ecosystemic one chosen in accordance with the belief that teachers' classroom practices need to be understood within the contexts of complex school environments and systems. Therefore, to know something about teachers' work (in this case, their usage of classroom materials) the complexities of their schools needed to be understood.

In attempting to capture something of the many enabling and constraining contextual factors in school environments, a variety of methods - including questionnaires, classroom observations, interviews and the analysis of texts and other classroom materials - were employed. Five to six classroom observations per teacher were completed and both they and their learners were interviewed. Inventories of school equipment were developed, photographs of libraries and bookrooms were taken and brief profiles of the participating teachers were written. Both quantitative and qualitative data have been collected using these methods and they are being analysed in a complementary manner.

The following data collection and analysis tools were used

#### *1 Profile of the project class*

These profiles - visual representations of the learners, their seating arrangements and selected characteristics - were developed collaboratively with the participating teachers during the



orientation sessions<sup>2</sup>. They have been helpful to the fieldworkers in getting to know the class context and possible learner influences on teachers' classroom practices.

## 2 *Profile of the participating teacher*

This short questionnaire was designed to provide researchers with some initial background knowledge of individual teachers and their teaching experience. (See Appendix 3)

## 3 *General school profile*

This questionnaire was designed to provide researchers with some general information about the school in order to help contextualise the classroom practices observed. (See Appendix 4)

## 4 *Profile of resources and classroom materials available in your school*

This longer questionnaire was designed to contribute to the development of inventories of resources and classroom materials. Different sections included in this questionnaire focused on libraries, equipment - its availability and accessibility - textbooks and networks, and commercially produced and teacher generated materials. (See Appendix 5)

## 5 *Language profile*

This questionnaire was designed to provide information on the extent to which the participating schools are multilingual. (See Appendix 6)

## 6 *Decision-makers, equipment and classroom materials*

This questionnaire was designed to help researchers to understand who makes important decisions about equipment and classroom materials in the school. As such, it helps researchers to understand the power relations and their possible influence on teachers' use of classroom resources. (See Appendix 7)

## 7 *Weekly plan*

Teachers completed one of these for *each week* in which an observed lesson was scheduled. These helped fieldworkers understand the wider context of the observed lesson. In addition, they facilitated the choice of observed lesson. (See Appendix 8)

## 8 *Lesson plan*

Teachers completed one of these for each observed lesson handing it to the fieldworker before the start of these lessons. These plans were designed to orientate the fieldworker and were used as a basis for questions during interviews. (See Appendix 9)

## 9 *Participating teacher's reflection on observed lesson*

Teachers were required to complete one of these sheets after each observed lesson. It was anticipated that teachers' reflections would be an important aspect of the follow-up interviews. (See Appendix 10)

<sup>2</sup> These were held prior to any classroom-based observations being conducted. The aims of these sessions were to introduce the participating teachers to each other, explain the aims of the project and allay any fears the teachers might have about observation sessions. At these sessions, each teacher was provided with a file in which s/he kept questionnaires, examples of classroom materials used etc.

## 10 *Participating learner's profile*

Fieldworkers facilitated the completion of these forms during their last visit to the school. Each learner in a project class completed the questionnaire which was designed to provide information about the socio-economic context of learners and the extent of their exposure to language through a variety of media. (See Appendix 11)

(This final session also included discussions with pupils around the different resources, materials and teaching and learning methodologies used in the lessons observed in each class. The questions used during this session were structured around the lessons observed.)

## 11 *Classroom observation sheet*

The observation schedule, designed to help us develop descriptions of the use of classroom materials in the context of the project classrooms, was completed by fieldworkers during each observed lesson. (See Appendix 12)

The observation sheet consists of a white A3 size paper as well as two A4 sheets of acetate stapled to the bottom sheet on each side. On the lower sheet, the following *contextual dimensions* for observing and recording the classroom materials and the ways in which they are used were included:

- the *classroom environment* is a dimension which includes equipment such as the chalkboard as well as materials displayed on the walls such as posters. This section of the observation sheet has also been used to include more general descriptions of the classroom (e.g. the following extract has been taken from this section of one of the observation sheets "A depressing classroom with large grave-like holes filled with rubbish in the floor, broken windows and ceiling panels (it leaks when it rains), obscene and (I thought) violent sexual images amongst the graffiti on the walls.")
- the *time* at which different teaching and learning activities and practices begin and end. This section of the observation sheet helps researchers to record and subsequently analyse the time spent on the teaching and learning activities and the pace at which these are done. Where there is no change in activity, this, too, has been recorded. (The researcher might comment on this on the overlay sheet described below.)
- the *important words and actions* which contextualise the classroom materials used. These we have found are most usually the words and actions of the teacher but occasionally those of learners, too. In this section we noted for example whether or not (and how) teachers greeted their classes when entering the class, whether classroom materials were distributed at the beginning of the lesson (perhaps having been carried by the teacher from the bookroom where they are stored for safekeeping) or whether learners took these out from their desks etc.
- The *three columns relating to the classroom materials* are the most important foci for these descriptions. The first column was designed to answer the question "*What* classroom materials are used in this class?" (For example "Passage taken from local newspaper entitled

"Kids `can help fight crime". Three columns - half an A4 page of print. No questions attached. Photocopied - one per learner. Chalkboard" was written in this section of one observation sheet.)

The second column was designed to answer the question "What *instructions* are given in connection with the materials?" This question was developed while studying videotaped lessons where we found that teachers often gave instructions to learners at the same time as handing out classroom materials. (For example "Yusuf asked individual learners to read aloud the comprehension questions which had formed part of the previous lesson. (Pupils had written these in their books.)")

The third column was designed to answer the question "*How and why* are the classroom materials used?" The first part of this question requires a description of the activities and practices observed in the lesson. The second part of the question is not always as easy to observe since not all teachers explain why they are using particular materials in their classrooms - at least not in their lessons. Nevertheless, researchers are required to interpret what they see and to provide this interpretation (which is tested in interviews with teachers and in discussions with the other researchers).

The lower sheet of the observation schedule was designed, therefore, to provide a description of the use of classroom materials in context. The top sheet or overlay - two acetate sheets stapled to each side of this bottom sheet - provided space for the researchers to evaluate and comment on each of the sections described above as well as to provide any additional comments. In effect, these became a first layer of analysis.

After completing the observation sheet in the lesson, researchers reworked the data into shorter summaries entitled "Key points in classroom observation"<sup>3</sup>. (Similarly, the subsequent interviews with teachers were summarised as "Key points in interviews.")

To validate the descriptions and judgements of individual researchers, each project teacher was observed by at least two researchers. Descriptions of their observations and evaluations of these were the focus of weekly discussions each week during the fieldwork phase of the project.

The classroom observation sheets, the researcher's "Key points in classroom observation", the teacher's lesson plan and her reflection questionnaire were filed together with copies of the classroom materials used in that lesson. This package of recorded, organised and semi-analysed data was then used by the project leader to develop a databank of all observed lessons.

Once the data for individual teachers had been analysed, comparisons across teachers and schools were made. In addition, comparisons of these data with teaching and learning practices described in recent policy documents were made. Finally, three broad repertoires of practices

<sup>3</sup> At this point, we believe that the writing of unstructured fieldnotes in order to develop rich descriptions would be a better way forward than using a structured or semi-structured observation sheet. It is *difficult* to develop rich descriptions from an observation sheet but easier to develop categories from rich descriptions. This approach, does however, take more time therefore we recommend that more than 2 days a week for 6 months be considered in future.

were identified and developed. Although the study was limited to only four schools, the empirical data is useful in developing an understanding of the practices to be expected in similar schools in the greater Cape Town area.

The following quotation is useful in describing the research approach adopted for this project. "Theory developed this way emerges from the bottom up (rather than from the top down), from many disparate pieces of collected evidence that are interconnected. It is called grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). As a qualitative researcher planning to develop some kind of theory about what you have been studying, the direction you will travel comes after you have been collecting the data, after you have spent time with your subjects. You are not putting together a puzzle whose picture you already know. You are constructing a picture which takes shape as you collect and examine the parts. The process of data analysis is like a funnel: Things are open at the beginning (or top) and more directed and specific at the bottom. The qualitative researcher plans to use part of the study to learn what the important questions are. He or she does not assume that enough is known to recognise important concerns before undertaking the research" (Bogdan and Biklen 1992:32).

### **The structure of the report**

There are three further sections to this report. Section B provides a description of the research sites - four historically disadvantaged and under-resourced schools in the greater Cape Town area. Short profiles of the seven project teachers and descriptions of their classrooms are provided. The resources available, accessible and used by the teachers are recorded. This section provides the context in which the seven project teachers worked.

Section C, the core of the report, describes and compares three broad repertoires of practices identified and developed in this study. These descriptions have been drawn from the teachers' lesson plans (in particular, the lesson objectives in these) the researchers' classroom observations, and 'progressive' educational policy and theory. Disjunctures between the three repertoires are highlighted.

Section D provides conclusions, implications and recommendations based on the trends and patterns described in the previous two sections.

A number of appendices have been attached the first of which is a statement of expenditure for the project.

## SECTION B

### THE RESEARCH SITES

#### SCHOOLS, TEACHERS, CLASSROOMS AND RESOURCES

This section of the report provides a description of the research sites - in particular, the four project schools and the seven participating teachers, the teachers' classrooms and the resources available, accessible and used during the course of the fieldwork.

##### The schools

When conceptualising the project within the six month PEI time constraint, it was decided that four schools should be selected - two from the now defunct Department of Education and Training (DET) and two from the ex-House of Representatives (HOR)<sup>4</sup>.

The TLRC staff's knowledge of schools in the greater Cape Town area helped in the identification of eight possible schools. The final selection required that the school needed to:

- be historically disadvantaged
- have some resources<sup>5</sup> available
- be interested in educational development
- not be involved in another project in this area of development
- have English second language as a teaching subject
- be willing to participate in the study

Although the Group Areas Act has been revoked in South Africa, for the most part people continue to live in the same areas as they did before the 1994 change of government. The 'racial' composition of schools in some areas has changed as parents enrol their children in schools which they believe will provide a better education and opportunities. Only one school in this project - School C - showed evidence of this trend<sup>6</sup>.

As might be expected, the homes of learners in ex-HOR schools were better resourced than those of learners in the ex-DET schools. These learners also had greater access to books and reported watching more television and going to more films than those in the ex-DET schools.

<sup>4</sup> Prior to 199- } there were eighteen different education departments defined by the apartheid government in South Africa. These have since been merged into one national education department with each of the nine provinces retaining areas of local control.

<sup>5</sup> while the study focuses on under-resourced schools, we included schools with at least *some* resources and classroom materials and hoped that, in selecting schools with *different amounts and types* of resources, interesting and comparative dimensions would emerge.

<sup>6</sup> Another interesting trend is that of many parents' choice to enrol their children as English first-language speakers so that they may join the English first-language classes even though English is their second language. These children often speak Afrikaans as a first language but there is a greater status attached to English. One teacher said that she thought some parents believed that Afrikaans would be phased out in time. Learners from African-language speaking homes are also inclined to seek out the English- as opposed to the Afrikaans-speaking classes; consequently, many English second-languages speakers attend English-first language lessons.

**Table 1 - Background information about the four project schools and learners**

	SCHOOL A		SCHOOL B		SCHOOL C	SCHOOL D	
<b>Previous education department</b>	DET		DET		HOR	HOR	
<b>Location</b>	African township		Peri-urban - learners mostly commute from informal settlements		Coloured township -close to an African township	Coloured township	
<b>Languages in which content subjects are taught</b>	English with Xhosa as a support		English with Xhosa as a support		English and Afrikaans	Afrikaans and English	
<b>Languages in which content subjects are examined</b>	English		English		English and Afrikaans	Afrikaans and English	
<b>Number of pupils present in project class when surveyed</b>	63	59	32	27	48	35	30
<b>Learners with access to more than 50 books at home<sup>7</sup></b>	16%	36%	31%	15%	58%	63%	40%
<b>Learners with dictionaries at home</b>	97%	86%	88%	59%	96%	77%	70%
<b>Learners with access to sets of encyclopaedia at home</b>	10%	2%	3%	4%	31%	9%	10%
<b>Learners with television at home</b>	95%	93%	97%	96%	96%	97%	93%
<b>Learners with access to a computer at home</b>	2%	5%	6%	00%	31%	6%	10%
<b>Learners with access to the internet at home</b>	2%	3%	3%	00%	10%	00%	00%

<sup>7</sup> This and the following statistics are expressed as percentages.

It is, however, important not to generalise about the schools from specific ex-departments. There are an enormous range of socio-economic and historical factors which impact on each school in a unique way. We were well aware of this range even within the two pairs of schools where the project was located.

During the fieldwork period in schools, we noted the unpredictability of timetables and that the contact time or time spent on task varied considerably. Fieldworkers often needed to reschedule appointed observation periods because of changes to the timetable structure. There were several times when teachers themselves appeared confused about the times lessons were due to begin and end? The school day often began after eight o' clock and ended before one o' clock during the time that we worked in schools.

In one school teachers were often not in their classes during lesson time leaving learners to amuse themselves in the grounds outside the classrooms. The resulting noise made it very difficult for teachers in nearby classes to be heard. In another, teachers seemed to move from one class to another in arbitrary fashion - without consulting watches or clocks. One teacher's lessons ranged in length from ten minutes to forty five minutes.

The lack of organisational structures, discipline and motivation were cause for concern. The researchers on this project all commented on the lack of collegiality within the departments or learning areas. Junior or more inexperienced teachers were very much left to their own devices.

### **The teachers**

Table 2 on the following page provides a brief profile of the participating teachers. Four of the seven teachers had university qualifications at undergraduate and postgraduate levels and three were college trained. One teacher was studying towards a Master's degree.

It is important to note that only four of the seven teachers had been trained as English second-language teachers. In addition, they were themselves English second-language speakers. The research team hypothesised that the project teachers' training in subjects other than English could provide the potential for an English-across-the-curriculum approach.

While accessing schools and selecting teachers for this project, it became clear that many teachers teaching English second-language at this level are not trained language teachers. This was the reason given by a number of teachers for their unwillingness to become involved in the project. As teachers of Biology, Mathematics, History and Geography, they lacked the confidence to participate in a study that focused on the teaching of language. This lack of confidence is important data in itself and runs contrary to the view that English second-language is 'a soft subject' which 'anyone can teach' - a view that appears to prevail in a number of schools.

All of the project teachers had had very little experience of in-service support and had attended very few relevant courses and/or workshops. No real thought appeared to have been given to teacher development.

**Table 2 - Profiles of the seven project teachers**

	<b>SCHOOL A</b>		<b>SCHOOL B</b>	
	<b>Teacher 1</b>	<b>Teacher 2</b>	<b>Teacher 3</b>	<b>Teacher 4</b>
<b>Educational qualifications</b>	Bachelor of Arts, Higher Diploma in Education	Bachelor of Arts, Higher Diploma in Education, Bachelor of Education	Secondary Teachers Diploma	Secondary Teachers Diploma
<b>Training in English-second language teaching</b>	Yes	Yes	No	No
<b>Other subjects taught</b>	Geography	History	Biology	Afrikaans
<b>No of years experience in teaching this subject</b>	2	3	4	1

	<b>SCHOOL C</b>		<b>SCHOOL D</b>
	<b>Teacher 5</b>	<b>Teacher 6</b>	<b>Teacher 7</b>
<b>Educational qualifications</b>	Higher Diploma in Education	Bachelor of Arts, Secondary Teachers Diploma, Bachelor of Education	Bachelor of Arts, Higher Diploma in Education, Bachelor of Education
<b>Training in English-second language teaching</b>	No	Yes	Yes
<b>Other subjects taught</b>	Mathematics	Library Education	Arabic
<b>No of years experience in teaching this subject</b>	1	10	11



## **The classrooms**

The classrooms used by the project teachers did little to inspire a love for learning. They were dull and unfriendly spaces. One, in particular, is worth noting. Sixty-nine learners were crowded into a prefabricated classroom - desks at odd angles to accommodate their number. Window panes were missing and several ceiling boards were in a state of disrepair. As a result, the wooden floor had rotted away in a couple of places leaving large grave-like holes filled with rubbish. On the walls were graffiti - pictures of penises as guns and the names of gangs in the area predominated.

Another classroom in this same school had no door to the dusty school playground beyond. Ironically, this school was described by one of the project teachers as "an outstanding school" although overcrowded.

The other classrooms in the other three project schools were in better repair but no more inspiring. Not one of these classrooms displayed a single picture, poster or example of learners' work. We were told that theft was rife and that no displays or exhibits would remain on the pinboards.

None of the project classrooms had cupboards in which teachers could store books or other equipment. Teachers pointed out that because they moved from classroom to classroom for lessons, they did not 'own' a classroom. There could, therefore, be no 'resident' sets of resources such as dictionaries or other reference materials.

## **The resources**

While the focus of the project is on printed materials, we found it useful to develop a fuller understanding of the availability and accessibility of the range of other resources in each of the project schools.

### ***Libraries and commercially produced resources***

Table 3 on the following page provides a comparison of the libraries and commercially produced resources (other than textbooks and setworks) in the four project schools.

Two of the four schools had operational libraries. One of the other two, had recently renovated a bright and spacious room which was due to be stocked with donated books, A person had volunteered to oversee this process and catalogue the books. The other school had a room called the library but the researcher was told that all the books had been stolen. There was some difference in the usage of the existing libraries: In School A there was a teacher who also acted as the librarian during certain timetabled periods. Teachers sent their learners to the library during library lessons. In School D, where there was no librarian, teachers accompanied their learners to the library. The latter school had recently established a Resources Committee to oversee the resourcing of the library and its use.

Libraries, like good teaching and learning materials, are often perceived as being of great importance to a school. While the validity of this perception was not part of this research project, researchers did not notice any significant relationship between the existence of school libraries and good teaching practices. We suggest that this would require a more focused research study.

**Table 3 - Libraries and commercially produced resources**

	SCHOOL A	SCHOOL B	SCHOOL C	SCHOOL D
<b>Library</b>	✓	Room allocated - books ready to be shelved	No longer in use - books "stolen"	✓
<b>Encyclopaedias</b>	✓	✓	×	✓
<b>Atlases</b>	✓	✓	×	✓
<b>Newspapers</b>	×	×	✓	✓
<b>Magazines</b>	×	×	✓	✓
<b>Journals</b>	×	×	×	×
<b>Bulletins</b>	×	✓	×	×
<b>Maps</b>	✓	✓	✓	✓
<b>Photographs</b>	×	×	×	✓
<b>Cartoons</b>	×	×	✓	✓
<b>Posters</b>	✓	×	×	✓
<b>Models</b>	×	✓	×	✓
<b>World globe</b>	✓	✓	×	✓
<b>Commercially produced worksheets</b>	✓ (From WCED)	×	×	✓

### *Equipment and audio-visual material*

Table 4 below provides a comparison of the equipment and audio-visual material available in the four project schools.

Although each of the schools had a television, tape-recorder, video-machine and a small number of overhead projectors, these items were seldom used by the project teachers. A couple pointed out that access to this equipment was difficult because it was kept in the principal's office, the book-room or in the classrooms of other teachers (such as science and business studies) - all rooms where there was greater security. Teachers explained that if they wanted to use these items, they needed to make arrangements in advance and to carry items from one venue to another between lessons. In explaining why she never used an overhead projector, one teacher said that the "commerce department considers the equipment to be theirs". Another teacher described the logistics of getting the equipment into her own classroom as "Off-putting". A third teacher pointed out that although the equipment was available in her school, the plug points in classrooms had been vandalised so that the electricity could not be used.

**Table 4 - Equipment and audio-visual material**

	SCHOOL A	SCHOOL B	SCHOOL C	SCHOOL D
Chalkboard	✓	✓	✓	✓
Television	✓	✓	✓	✓
Radio	✓	✓	X	✓
Tape-recorder	✓	✓	✓	✓
Video-machine	✓	✓	✓	✓
Commercially produced videos	?	✓	X	✓
Video camera	X	X	X	?
Commercially produced audiotapes	✓	X	X	✓
Overhead projectors	✓ 5	✓	✓ 3	✓
Slide projectors	✓	X	X	X
Computers	10			12

*Printed material in use during the project*

Table 5 below provides an overview of the printed materials used in the schools during the course of the project. This is followed by descriptions of the textbooks, worksheets, setworks and the teacher-generated materials used.

**Table 5 - Printed material in use during the project**

	SCHOOL A	SCHOOL B	SCHOOL C	SCHOOL D
<b>Textbooks used by learners</b>	-	1. <i>Successful English</i> : Howe, D.H.	-	-
<b>Textbooks used by teachers</b>	1. <i>Let's use English - Std 6</i> : Thembela, A. et al 2. <i>Advance with English</i> : Grant N et al 3. <i>Successful English</i> : Howe, D.H. 4. <i>English Made Easy</i> : Barnes, A.S.V. 5. <i>Focus on English</i> : Goodacre G.J. et al	2. <i>Secondary English - Book 2</i> : Sadler, R.K. et al 3. <i>English Made Easy</i> : Barnes A.S.V. 4. <i>Let's use English - Std 6</i> : Thembela A. et al	-	1. <i>English Alive</i> : Malan, R.
<b>Setworks</b>	<i>Love David</i> : Diane Case	<i>Love David</i> : Diane Case	<i>Tolly, Hero of Hanover Park</i> : M. Cassiem D'Arcy	<i>The Great Snake of Kalya and other adventures</i> : C Van Straten <i>Drama Workshop</i> : C.P Lloyd
<b>Other resources used by the teacher</b>	Dictionaries WCED work-sheets	Magazines	Magazines Newspapers	Encyclopaedia Newspapers Magazines

## ***Textbooks***

Only in one of the project schools - School B - did learners have copies of a textbook. They worked on exercises from these in class. Occasionally, the teachers in this school made photocopies of other comprehensions and exercises from other textbooks. A researcher in this school commented that by using a range of books, the teacher could opt out of using the more challenging exercises in the textbooks the learners were using. This point is further developed in the final section of the paper.

In each of the other three schools only the teachers - not the learners - had copies of textbooks. In two of these schools - Schools A and D - the teachers used these textbooks to prepare their lessons and to provide their learners with classwork and homework - usually in the form of comprehensions and language exercises. Sometimes these were photocopied and then handed to learners in class. At other times, teachers wrote exercises on the chalkboard. The teacher in the remaining school - School C - said that she found it difficult to work from textbook material but that she *did* use the content page to see what work she should cover during the year!

## ***Worksheets***

Worksheets, or single sheets of reproduced material which were distributed by the teacher to the learners, were used by all the project teachers. Indeed, they were the most commonly used teaching tool.

School A relied heavily on worksheets provided by the Western Cape Education Department. In this and in the other schools copied exercises from textbooks which learners did not have themselves. Teachers also reproduced crossword puzzles and one-page grammar and spelling activities from other books. Newspapers and magazines were used by two teachers as a basis for "putting things together" for their classes. These teachers used passages, cartoons and pictures from these sources adding their own instructions and questions. Two teachers had adapted cartoons, blanking out the speech bubbles for learners to fill in.

Most of the worksheets had been photocopied for the learners. Sometimes copies were shared and handed back to the teacher at the end of the lesson. On other occasions, each learner was given a copy to stick into their notebooks. The standard of photocopying was mostly poor, being too dark or illegible in places and having sections which *did* not fit onto the page. Roneoing, or printing from stencils, was only done in one of the four project schools. Stencils were cut from photocopied worksheets which meant that the content was the same and the quality even poorer.

## ***Setworks***

In three of the project schools - Schools A, B and C - the teachers thought the setworks they were currently using with their project classes - *Love David* by Diane Case and *Tolly, Hero of Hanover Park* by M. Cassiem D' Arcy - were appropriate. They spoke of the importance of "relevant" settings - those that reflected learners' own realities - and accessible language. Some

also felt that they could use these books to give their learners moral guidance. Learners themselves confirmed their enjoyment of these texts in group interviews at the end of the project.

The teacher in School C said that these two setworks were the only ones that she knew of that addressed learners' interests in this way. She said that she did not know which setworks she would be using the following term but that there would not be much choice. The teacher in School B said that she would like additional setworks with short stories so that she could use these to teach more morals.

In School D the teachers were less enthusiastic about the setworks they were using. The first teacher explained that although there was an African flavour to the short stories in *"The Great Snake of Kalya and other adventures"* by C. Van Straten, this text related to "jungle Africa" rather than his learners' experiences. He explained that his learners had been very influenced by American television and films but admitted that they was enjoying the book more than he had anticipated. He said that he thought that the "different cultural names" in the text served to broaden learners' minds. The other teacher in this school was using *Drama Workshop* edited by C.P. Lloyd and her report was less favourable. She thought the stories were "too Eurocentric" and also a little too difficult for her class. She said that the issues dealt with in the text were not what teenagers in South Africa need to grapple with every day.

### ***Teacher generated materials***

When asked whether they generated their own teaching materials, four of the seven teachers said they did. However, we learned that they understood "teacher-generated texts" in a variety of ways. For one teacher (who had not generated any of her own materials) this term appeared to mean the creation of her own posters and charts, but for the majority it meant the reproduction and/or adaptation of commercial materials. (These have been described in the section dealing with worksheets as we do not consider such reproduction and adaptation as materials developed by the teacher.)

Only one teacher seemed to have given any real thought to developing his own materials. He reported that he had taken some photographs but had not yet written the passages he wanted to go with these.

Half the teachers said that access to relevant and well-written texts would make it easier for them to develop their own classroom materials. One said that more time and access to more resources centre would be helpful.

## SECTION C

### REPERTOIRES OF PRACTICES

This section of the report provides descriptions of three broad repertoires of practices identified and developed during the course of this study. These draw on the seven project teachers' lesson plans<sup>8</sup> and reflective notes<sup>9</sup>, the researchers' classroom observation schedules and the discourses found in 'progressive' educational policy and educational theory policy - particularly those which give emphasis to the teacher as an agent of transformation. Examples of data collected from each of these sources are provided in this section.

Repertoires of practices may be understood as clusters of methods, skills and techniques<sup>10</sup> frequently used by teachers and learners. While there is some variation in each individual teacher's work and while there are differences between individual teachers in the project schools, the data collected during the fieldwork phase of the project enabled researchers to develop an understanding of the patterns of classroom practices of the project teachers as well as their use of classroom materials<sup>11</sup>.

Of particular interest to this project were the often subtle but significant differences between many of the teachers' objectives as stated in their lesson plans and the researchers' observations of their classroom practices. In addition, data collected during interviews revealed differences between teachers' discourses and their practices. Teacher E, herself, had noticed similar differences in her own work and had commented that although she knew what she wanted to achieve in each lesson, she was not always able to translate her ideas into practice. This became an important theme in the analysis of much of the teachers' work. Both Table 6 below and the ten extracts that follow illustrate these disjunctures.

The three repertoires should not be understood too rigidly or in too strict a hierarchy. Some of the project teachers were able to move between the different repertoires and employ the different practices associated with each of them. For these teachers the three repertoires represent options from which they can choose practices. These teachers, therefore, have a range of practices at their disposal and are more flexible in their teaching approaches and methods. They appear to read contexts and to make judgements in choosing practices to suit those contexts.

The degree of permeability between repertoires was extremely limited in the sample of teachers most of whom worked within the repertoire labelled "common practices". Occasionally, they

<sup>8</sup> In particular, the lesson objectives in these lesson plans were useful. These also gave some indication of teachers' broader views of language learning.

<sup>9</sup> In particular, teachers' responses to the question "What would you do differently next time?" was useful. Informal interviews also formed part of the reflective exercise.

<sup>10</sup> While particular theories of knowledge, of teaching and of learning underlie each of the repertoires, the identification of these was not the focus of this project.

<sup>11</sup> It is useful to note that in a feedback session to the project teachers, some said that these patterns were not entirely accurate and that during observation sessions they often taught in ways that were not representative of their work as a whole.

moved between this category and "good enough practices" but very rarely did researchers observe "best practices". For these teachers the first struggle is to move towards those practices which will help them to meet their lesson objectives.

**Table 6 - Three broad repertoires of practices\*<sup>12</sup>**

<b>"BEST" PRACTICES</b> <i>Views underlying 'progressive' educational theory and policy</i>	<b>"GOOD ENOUGH" PRACTICES</b> <i>Many project teachers' aims and objectives</i>	<b>"COMMON" PRACTICES</b> <i>Most frequently observed practices in this project</i>
<b>1. Understandings of language learning</b>		
Recognising language as <i>flexible and adaptable</i> , the teacher uses an <i>holistic approach</i> emphasising <i>original constructions and usage</i> and <i>deeper meaning</i> .	In aiming for <i>communicative competence</i> , the teacher is concerned with the <i>standards of language usage</i> such as correct pronunciation	The teacher relies heavily on <i>definitions, structures and rules</i> in teaching and learning language.
Attention is given to <i>fluency</i> and to learners' <i>appreciation</i> of literature and language	Learners are encouraged to <i>understanding the content</i> and to <i>enjoy</i> reading.	Learners' attention is focused on the <i>meaning of individual words or phrases</i> and to <i>read aloud without errors</i> .
*Classroom materials are selected and used to encourage the development of <i>broad knowledges and conceptual skills</i> such as analytical skills.	*Classroom materials are selected and used to develop <i>technical skills</i> such as summarising.	*Classroom materials are used to develop <i>surface understanding of the content</i> such as the vocabulary.
*Materials provide learners with <i>challenges</i> as they <i>develop new concepts and skills</i> .	*Materials provide <i>new content and exercises for practice</i> .	*Materials are used primarily to <i>drill</i> learners and to <i>keep them busy</i> for the timetabled lesson.
<b>2. Lesson Preparation</b>		
The teacher prepares her lesson with a <i>clear purpose</i> (whether articulated or not) which <i>extends beyond the objectives of that particular lesson</i> .	The teacher has identified <i>objectives for the specific lesson</i> . These are generally <i>not integrated or extended</i> to other lessons and wider purposes.	The teacher has decided on the <i>topic to be covered</i> . Objectives other than completing the syllabus are unclear.
The teacher's <i>thorough preparation</i> includes <i>anticipating learners' likely difficulties and problems</i> .	The teacher has <i>read through the material</i> and <i>decided on the content</i> to be covered.	The teacher has done <i>little or no preparation</i> . She/he works through the text, questions and exercises for the first time with the learners.

<sup>12</sup> Asterisks indicate the relationship between materials and practices.



*Classroom materials are selected, sometimes developed and used in accordance with a <i>wider vision</i> and the <i>learners' abilities and needs</i> .	*Classroom materials are selected and used as a <i>vehicle for the specific lesson objective and content</i> .	*Existing materials are used - often inadequately - to <i>cover the content</i> of the lesson.
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### 3. Classroom practices

Lessons are introduced within a <i>context and linkages</i> are made between the materials used and the content to be learned.	The lesson content is well-presented and follow-up exercises are <i>related</i> , i.e. the practice is in context.	Content is presented as <i>isolated and decontextualised</i> . Follow-up exercises are sometimes <i>unrelated</i> to the lesson content.
The teacher has a <i>range of teaching methods</i> and the <i>skills</i> with which to use these. He/she also has <i>coping strategies</i> on which to draw.	The teacher has a <i>limited range of methods, skills and coping strategies</i> on which to draw.	The teacher has <i>fixed methods of teaching</i> aspects of language and is not able to envisage other methods.
The teacher is able to <i>use the unexpected</i> such as questions or information provided by learners.	The teacher <i>acknowledges the unexpected</i> but does not know how to make use of it.	The teacher does not recognise and therefore <i>misses opportunities</i> for drawing on the unexpected.
The teacher constructs activities where learners <i>consult each other, discuss their ideas and learn from each other</i> . The content to be shared is <i>not predetermined</i> .	The teacher sets tasks where learners <i>work together and alongside each other</i> . The <i>outcomes are predictable</i> .	The teacher expects learners to work <i>individually</i> (even though they may be clustered in groups). <i>Responses are predetermined</i> and <i>model answers</i> are used.
The teacher allows learners to take centre stage and adopts a <i>marginal role</i> during some classroom activities.	The teacher provides a <i>structured learning environment</i> and <i>encourages learners to work independently</i> of her/him.	The teacher is <i>central</i> to all classroom activities.
Learners learn to <i>interpret instructions</i> before following them.	Learners are reminded to read and <i>take note of instructions</i> .	Learners are expected to <i>follow the teacher's instructions</i> in a mechanical way.
Learners are given opportunities to <i>read between the lines</i> of texts in classroom materials and in tests.	Learners are asked to provide a <i>generalised understanding of the surface content</i> of texts.	Learners are required to provide <i>irrelevant facts and/or one-word answers</i> to questions on texts.

*Classroom materials are selected and used to facilitate <i>learner engagement</i> .	*Classroom materials are selected and used to facilitate <i>understanding</i> .	*Classroom materials are selected and used to support the <i>teachers' presentation of content</i> (which is not always accurate).
*The teacher <i>uses carefully selected commercially produced materials well</i> and may also <i>develop original classroom materials</i> in terms of a wider vision and learners' abilities and needs.	*The teacher <i>selects and adapts commercially produced materials</i> .	*The teacher <i>selects and makes poor quality reproductions of extracts from commercially produced materials</i> .

#### 4. Assessment

The teacher adopts a <i>diagnostic and reflective</i> approach to assessment and learners are encouraged to understand why the error was made and why it is an error.	The teacher <i>checks learners' understanding</i> of lesson content and ensures that <i>errors are corrected</i> .	The teacher <i>signs, stamps or ticks</i> learners' written work. The work <i>is seen but not evaluated</i> .
The teacher uses <i>continuous assessment</i> to <i>closely monitor and understand</i> learners' progress	The teacher <i>marks tests and other classroom and homework activities</i> .	The teacher <i>administers tests from time to time</i> .
*Tests demand <i>a range of skills</i> and require that learners <i>move beyond reproducing work previously covered</i> .	*Tests <i>test skills and understanding of work covered in class</i> .	*Tests require <i>short responses</i> which are <i>either right or wrong in terms of which has been taught</i> .

#### `Common' and `good enough' practices

This section provides selected examples of the seven teachers' lessons. Extracts which are representative and which illustrate aspects of `common' and `good enough' practices were chosen for inclusion. (A list of all the lessons observed can be found in Appendix 13.) Extract 1

This first extract was selected to illustrate the use of setworks in class. The novel *Love David* by Diane Case was the text in question during this lesson.

Teacher 1 wrote the following objectives for this lesson with her Grade 8 class:

- to improve reading and comprehension skills
- to check if pupils can express the passage in their own words
- to check the pupils' opinion

### ***The researcher's observations***

*Learners in this class did not all have copies of the networks. The researcher noted that in most cases there was one book between three or four learners and that there were also a few groups of three or four learners who did not have access to a book at all. Some of these learners sat with their heads on their desks. As a result it was difficult to gauge whether they were following the story or not.*

*While learners were still finding the right pages in their books, the teacher asked one to begin to read aloud from the text. She did not ask any questions or provide any reminders of the story so far. For the first ten minutes of the lesson, there was a great deal of noise from other learners waiting outside nearby classrooms for their teachers to arrive after the tea break. So great was the noise at one point that the researcher could not hear the first reader who was only a couple of desks away.*

*This reader continued to read -fairly fluently although with little expression -for approximately five minutes after which the teacher stopped her. She then asked the class if they could remember what had happened in the previous chapter. She said "No " to the first learner's response to this question and repeated the question. The next learner's response satisfied her and she then nominated another to continue to read the book aloud. While each reader was given the opportunity to read without interruptions from the teacher, learners' understanding of the passage was not evaluated.*

The lesson continued in similar vein without the teacher asking many questions or providing opportunities for learners to express their opinions. The teacher's role was largely limited to nominating readers, correcting pronunciation errors and asking questions which barely scratched the surface meaning of the text.

Enjoyment of reading did not feature in the lesson objectives but, in a subsequent interview this teacher commented that she knew that learners enjoyed it when she read aloud to them. This however, she rarely did and learners almost always read the network in class.

### **Extract 2**

This extract illustrates the difficulties experienced by teachers who lack content knowledge in a particular learning area - in this case Active and Passive Voice. No printed material was used in this lesson nor did the teacher record having used any textbook in preparing for the lesson.

## Extract 28

This extract illustrates the decontextualisation of passages taken by teachers from textbooks. Teacher 3 selected a passage entitled 'The Life Cycle of the Frog' from a textbook and wrote the objectives for her lesson as being:

- Sentence construction
- Reading with Understanding
- Quick thinking
- Ability to select facts from a long speech
- Reporting in the same tense

*The researcher's observations* The teacher began the lesson by reading the comprehension passage aloud and then asked the question "What is a life cycle? " There was no discussion whatsoever about frogs and what learners knew about them or whether they had learnt about frogs at school before. The abstract nature of the first question and the lack of contextualisation seem strange given that this teacher is primarily a Biology teacher.

*The teacher worked laboriously through the text stopping to explain words - both those highlighted in the text and others. The teacher asked learners questions which they found difficult to answer so she provided the answers herself. Some examples of these questions include the following : "What is hibernate? ", "What is fertilisation? ", "What is fertilise the eggs? " Only one question did not relate directly to the meaning of the text; instead, it dealt with punctuation conventions - "What is the use of the apostrophe? "*

*Learners were then asked to summarise the passage in 10 points and in not more than 45 words. Other instructions given at this point included injunctions not to be vague, to use full sentences and to use the same tense. Learners did this task individually and in silence. Although the learners were seated in groups, no group work was done in this lesson. The pictures of the tadpole and the frog next to the comprehension passage were not referred to in explanations of terms such as "external gills ". One of the exercises below the text was a guided summary of the passage but that, too, was ignored by the teacher.*

The emphasis given to grammar, definitions and the surface meaning of vocabulary is clear in this extract. In addition to the teacher's tendency to transmit her own understanding of the terms used in the lesson, the passage was not presented to the learners within a broader context. There was little evidence of the learners' needs having shaped the lesson. Similarly, little effort seemed to have been made to motivate and engage the learners' interest. It was at this point in the study that the research team began to hypothesise that teachers select and use texts only in-so-far as they reinforce their own established practices.

Teacher 2 wrote the following as her lesson objective:

- To differentiate the action that takes place at present and the action that we are concerned about, person or thing performing the action (doer)

*The researcher's observations*

*The teacher began the lesson by asking learners what the word "active " meant. After the initial silence that followed this question, she then repeated the question in Xhosa and learners were able to respond. The teacher then asked for "action sentences". This instruction, too, was translated into Xhosa. When the example "Billy kicked the ball" was offered, the teacher altered this to "Billy kicks the ball " asking learners why she had substituted kicks for kicked. One learner suggested it was because it was the present tense. The teacher then asked for further examples of "action sentences". "He sweeps the floor", "Mother cooks the food" and "He drives the car" were offered.*

*The teacher then asked the class what `passive " meant. When no response was forthcoming, the teacher provided an explanation in both English and Xhosa. This explanation did little to help the learners understand the concept. (Indeed the researcher found it difficult to capture the explanation in writing.) The teacher pointed out that "Billy" was the subject of the sentence, "kicks" the verb and "ball" the object. She then provided the passive construction - "The ball is kicked by Billy ". She added that any sentence could be changed to the passive voice irrespective of the tense of the verb.*

*The teacher continued to ask learners to provide examples of sentences which were then translated into the passive voice. Learners were reluctant to deviate from the tried and tested constructions used in previous examples but even this strategy did not help them. For example, one provided the sentence "They are going to the scrapyard" and then suggested "The scrapyard is being gone by them " as the passive voice. Another error occurred when a learner suggested "The train is going to Durban " and reworked this as "Durban is being gone by the train. " The teacher did not correct these mistakes.*

This lesson also illustrates the strategy of rule-based teaching - possibly a practice readily adopted by teachers without adequate content knowledge. It may also be significant that this teacher was not an English first-language speaker, had not been trained as an English second-language teacher but had been trained as an Afrikaans teacher.

Clearly, the use of prepared exercises - instead of learner-generated sentences - would have provided a range of examples to be used in this lesson. In addition, a good textbook could have guided both the teacher's understanding and her practice.

A number of inaccuracies were noted in project teacher's lessons - one of our favourites being "Bafana Bafana is a collective noun"!

### Extract 30

It is useful to compare Extract 3 above with the following three extracts - taken from three lessons observed in Teacher 6's classroom. This teacher came closest to introducing and maintaining 'good enough' practices. This he achieved partly by selecting a passage which was relevant to learners' interests and partly by engaging them in thinking about and discussing issues beyond the text. The passage dealt with issues which learners identified with and the teacher used it as a vehicle both for learning vocabulary and grammar conventions and for discussions linked to broader issues.

A significant difference between this teacher's work and that of the other project teachers was the number of lessons spent on this one passage. It was the central text for four of the five observed lessons. It also featured in a number of other lessons between and after these observed lessons. This teacher's approach encouraged the integration of a number of skills and provided linkages between lessons. Many of the other project teachers, on the other hand, made few references to previous lessons and tended to present the content for each lesson quite discretely. Teacher 6 also demonstrated good questioning skills and introduced a sense of urgency in his lessons. However, his lessons were generally teacher-centred with few opportunities provided for learners to shape the lessons by asking their own questions.

The passage used was an article taken from a local newspaper. It was entitled "Kids 'can help fight crime'" and had been photocopied so that each learner had a copy. (These copies were collected at the end of the lesson and then handed out again at the beginning of the next lesson.) The teacher's lesson objectives for the first observed lesson were to:

- stimulate discussion around identifiable problems in the community
- get thinking about problems in the community going.

#### *The researcher's observations*

*The teacher began the lesson by telling the class that they would not be doing any writing that day. Instead they would be reading and talking about an important topic. The photocopied article was handed out to learners and the teacher asked a number of questions connected to the headline. Learners enjoyed giving responses to these - sometimes in chorus, at other times individually. This question and answer session continued for approximately ten minutes during which time learners spoke about their own knowledge and experience of crimes in their community. Gang violence was an important theme in these responses.*

*The teacher then asked the learners to read the article in silence - three minutes being given for this activity. After this had been done, he asked one learner to read the first sentence aloud. Further questions were asked by the teacher who wrote words and phrases used in the text and in learners' responses on the chalkboard. He also directed learners' attention to grammar and vocabulary used - such as synonyms.*

*The learners were then asked to consider in pairs how they would be able to fight crime. After about five minutes, a number of learners were given the opportunity to present their ideas. The teacher developed a summary of key points mentioned on the chalkboard.*

Both the teacher and the researcher felt that the lesson had gone well and that the lesson objectives had been met. In addition, they both felt that the learning materials had been effective and had engaged the learners' interest.

### **Extract 5**

For the subsequent lesson, Teacher 6 wrote that he wanted to:

- go through the comprehension
- develop an understanding of the issues found in the passage
- develop an understanding of the vocabulary in the passage.

#### *The researcher's observations*

*The teacher began the lesson by asking the class who could remember what had been discussed in the lesson on the previous Friday. Gang violence was a major theme in the responses to this question and the teacher asked further questions drawing on the learners' own knowledge and experience of this topic.*

*The subsequent activity in the classroom alternated between individual learners reading short extracts of the text aloud and the teacher asking questions based on this. Again, learners responded to these questions either individually or in chorus. Sometimes the teacher nominated a learner to respond but at other times learners called out their answers spontaneously.*

*Two broad categories of questions were used - text-bound and issue-centred. Text-bound questions required that learners focus on particular words and conventions used in the text and to develop an understanding of these. For example, the teacher pointed to the name of the journalist, asked learners to scrutinise the text for errors (especially typographical ones) and to work out how abbreviations are constructed. Many of the questions related to the meaning of words used in the text and began with the words "What is the meaning of... ? " The teacher also asked learners to look for similarities and differences between words in order to develop an understanding of their meaning. In addition, questions based on the content and learners' understanding of this were asked. For example, "Who is the Director of the local police station? " and "Why did he have a meeting of community leaders? " Here learners had to find the answers in the passage.*

*Issue-bound questions were similar to those asked in the previous lesson and at the beginning of this lesson. Again many of the responses from learners were related to gangsterism on the Cape Flats.*

*The teacher did not always accept a learner's response as the full answer and often encouraged other learners to add to this by prompting "And what else? " Once again, he made*

*use of the chalkboard to record certain words - both those in the text and those in either his questions or the learners' responses.*

The teacher felt that this lesson had gone relatively well although he thought that perhaps the whole passage should have been read before any questions were posed. While the questions may have interrupted the flow of the reading of the text, pausing to ask questions did ensure that learners' understanding was clarified almost immediately - one of the chief aims of many of the project teachers..

Although many questions were posed by the teacher during this lesson, none of these required learners to critically examine the ways in which language was used as a tool to influence readers' thinking. Instead the emphasis was on was the meaning of the words (and strategies for working this out) and the grammatical conventions used.

### **Extract 6**

In the third of these observed lessons, the teacher wanted:

- the learners to answer questions on the passage individually on the chalkboard
- to correct the errors made
- to revise work covered in previous lessons.

#### *The researcher's observations*

*The teacher began the lesson by telling the learners that they were going to answer the questions they had worked on in a previous (not observed) lesson. He went on to ask for a summary of the passage. In effect this tested learners' memory of the content of the passage and their understanding of a number of words. During this time the photocopied passage was distributed and learners took out their exercise books in which they had written responses to a number of questions - which they had copied from the board - in the previous lesson.*

*A volunteer was asked to read aloud the first three questions that had been set and three other learners each wrote their responses to these on sections of the chalkboard board demarcated by the teacher for this purpose. Learners were then asked to evaluate and comment on these responses. This was accomplished with the teacher asking more focused questions about specific responses and reminding learners about certain conventions and definitions (such as the use of quotation marks). He also pointed to incorrect spelling and grammar, encouraging learners to correct these. In a couple of instances, he rewrote entire sentences on the board.*

Much of the teaching and learning that occurred in this lesson again reflected the question and response interaction observed in the previous two lessons. The teacher continued to take a central role in all the activities including those questions encouraging peer-evaluation. These questions were focused predominantly on spelling and grammar as well as learners' surface understanding. In other words, while learners were active and engaged, this was only at 'common' and 'good enough' practice levels.



## Extract 7

Teacher 5 was the most creative of the project teachers and the researchers who observed her lessons were well aware of the effort to which she had gone in preparing the lessons. She was the teacher who - early in the project - had made the comment that although she knew what she wanted to achieve, she was not always able to achieve her objectives. This extract provides a good example of her difficulties in this regard.

This teacher wrote her lesson objectives for the first observed lesson of her Grade 8 class in the following way:

- This lesson forms part of the objective for the quarter, i.e. creativity in writing, speaking and thinking. This lesson aims to make pupils aware of the use in body and facial expression in cartoons and verbal conversations.

Although the teacher linked this lesson to the work for the quarter, contexts and issues beyond the classroom were not developed.

The materials used in this lesson were examples of cartoons from newspapers and magazines which learners had found and stuck into their workbooks.

### *The researcher's comments*

*The teacher asked the learners to take out their cartoons and reminded them that they had been dealing with Direct Speech and Reported Speech in previous lessons. She reminded them that conversation was "the purist form of direct speech ". She then asked the class whether they could see the words "he said" or "they said" in their cartoons. The class chorused "No" She followed this with a series of questions - "How do we know what's happening? ", "How do we know who's speaking? ", "And what they're thinking? " and "How do we know what the mood is? " Once again, the learners called out responses, not always to the teacher's satisfaction. In particular, they found the last question about mood difficult.*

*The teacher then used herself as the teaching tool - showing the class different facial expressions and using different postures to convey a number of moods etc. When the learners responded, she wrote up the words "Face - expression ", "Tone " and "Body language - hands" on the chalkboard.*

*Learners were then asked to look at their cartoons and to find someone with an angry face. They were then asked to describe this face. Some learners found this difficult (possibly because not all their cartoons had such faces) so the teacher drew a sketch of an unhappy face on the chalkboard.*

*The teacher's next question was : "If you take the pictures in the cartoons away and left just the speech bubbles, how would you then tell how people felt? " There were no responses at all to this question so the teacher then asked the class to describe what they imagined Juliet's expression to be when she said "Romeo, Romeo, wherefore art thou?" Again, the learners*

*seemed perplexed (although they seemed to understand the reference) so the teacher asked them what a comic strip of this scene would look like. When learners were still unable to provide satisfactory responses, the teacher gave an exaggerated portrayal of how she thought Juliet might have said the words concluding with "She's in love. How do I know she's in love? " One learner gave a response but the teacher said, "Don 't tell me how to say it. Tell me how I know to say it. " It became clear that what she wanted was learners to tell her that the scriptwriter would provide some short notes ('am insertion') in the script and then the actors would know what expression to use and what mood to convey.*

*Learners clearly found many of the questions posed during this lesson very confusing. The point of the lesson was not clarified until the last couple of minutes when the teacher told the class that they needed to add descriptions (adjectives and adverbs) to their own writing. This she told them would help to make their writing "less boring".*

In her reflective notes, this teacher wrote that she thought that she had helped the learners to develop "an awareness of the use of body language and facial expressions". She also wrote that if she were to repeat this lesson, she would "phrase the questions in such a manner that the outcome could be reached sooner" indicating her own awareness of inadequate questioning techniques and skills.

It was interesting to note that this teacher did seem to work on these skills during the course of her involvement in this project and that her questions became more focused. Extract 8 has been taken from a subsequent lesson.

### **Extract 8**

In this lesson, Teacher 6 used the same cartoons to continue to teach Direct and Indirect Speech - a topic which had been introduced in previous lessons.

Her objectives were for the learners to:

- report events
- rewrite direct speech into reported speech

#### *The researcher's observations*

*The teacher began the lesson by telling the class that they should think of story time when people are chatting in a room. They were also asked to imagine that there was a fly on the wall and that the fly was going to report on all that was said. The class listened attentively as the teacher gave an example.*

*She then asked the learners to watch her and to listen carefully for the following minute and to record her actions and speech in their workbooks. The teacher performed a number of actions and, when the intercom buzzed, spoke to the secretary in the office. The learners wrote rapidly in their book during this time. After a while the teacher stopped moving and waited for the class to finish writing. She then asked the class what they had written and, as they responded,*

wrote their responses on the chalkboard also asking them to supply the correct punctuation. She paused whenever a mistake was made and learners seemed to recognise this as a cue for them to think again.

The next activity required the learners to change the reported speech in this short passage to direct speech. Again, this was written on the chalkboard.

Using one of the learners' cartoons, the teacher copied some of the speech bubbles on the chalkboard and then asked the class to provide the reported speech. She suggested that they should imagine themselves as new reporters, an idea that seemed to appeal to this class.

In reflecting on this lesson, Teacher 5 said that "pupils were able to tap into their own resources/knowledge to devise the method for translating direct speech into reported speech". In addition, she wrote that learners "discovered that having gossiped before, they have reported events". Asked what she would do differently in a repeat lesson, she wrote, "If duplicating was not such a hassle, I'd give pupils copies of the same cartoon, or use the OHP. However, by having pupils bring their own cartoons, hopefully they will be more aware when reading comic in future."

This teacher's enthusiasm for helping her learners was also reflected in her openness to understanding her inadequacies and to developing new skills. She often asked the researchers for comments and suggestions for improvement.

It is useful to contrast this lesson with the next extract which has also been taken from a lesson dealing with direct and reported speech.

### **Extract 9**

Teacher 7 also used a cartoon in this lesson but here all learners had a photocopy of the same one - a Madam and Eve cartoon.

The teacher wrote the objectives of this lesson as:

- Revision of week's work i.e. Pupils should have learnt the following terms - frame, speech bubble, character, setting, punchline

#### *The researcher's observations*

*The learners already had copies of the cartoons in their workbooks so the lesson began with the teacher reminding them of the previous lesson where terms like frames and speech bubbles had been discussed. She then wrote a number of questions on the chalkboard which learners copied into their books. These questions are listed below:*

1. *Where is the cartoon set?*
2. *Name two clues which tell you this?*
3. *How many characters are depicted in the cartoon?*

4. *Who are they?*
5. *How many frames are used in the cartoon?*
6. *How many speech bubbles are used?*
7. *Write down one word to describe the expression on the characters' faces in the following frames: (a) Madam in frame 3 (b) Eve in frame 2 (c) Madam and Eve in frame 5*
8. *Why are the words in frames 7 and 9 written in bold words?*
9. *What indication does the cartoon give you that Madam is richer than Eve? 10. In which frames are the punchlines in the cartoons usually found?*

*The teacher provided an explanation of certain questions and then asked the learners to answer these in pairs. Once they began this task, she stood against the wall at the side of room. A number of learners spoke to each other in Afrikaans while working together on the questions. At the end of the lesson, the teacher told the learners to complete the questions for homework.*

The only aspect of the lesson this teacher thought she would change in a repeat lesson was to print the questions on a worksheet "in order to allow for more time for class discussion of the answers". Very little learner motivation was engendered in this lesson and although learners were asked to work together in pairs, the exercise had not been designed to make the most of shared responses.

The cartoon had been used in previous lessons but the questions set on it for this lesson offered few opportunities for further learning. The emphasis given to technical details in the cartoon were noted.

### **Extract 10**

The two lessons referred to in the final extract dealt with parts of speech. In the first of these, Teacher 2 wrote that she hoped that her learners would be able to identify some parts of speech e.g. verbs, nouns, pronouns etc.

She had used two textbooks - *English Made Easy - Std 6* by A. S. V. Barnes and *Focus on English* by G.T. Goodacre et al - when preparing the lesson. During the lesson she used only the chalkboard for writing notes.

#### *The researcher's observations*

*The teacher began the lesson by telling the class that she was going to give them a list of parts of speech. Their task was to provide examples of each of these. At the same time, they needed to write notes in their workbooks. The teacher used the chalkboard to write the names of the parts of speech as well as the notes and examples of these.*

*The teacher started with pronouns, writing a definition on the board and then asking learners for examples. Once the teacher had a few examples on the board, she moved on to verbs giving learners the definition in Xhosa before writing it in English on the board. Again, as soon as learners had provided a number of examples, the teacher moved on to adverbs. This pattern*

was repeated with adjectives, conjunctions, prepositions and, finally, nouns. All four types of nouns were dealt with in this way. The examples of the different parts of speech were given in isolation rather than in full sentences

Some learners seemed to find it difficult to listen, respond to the teacher's questions and write notes simultaneously.

In the next lesson observed in this teacher's class, two photocopied worksheets were given to the learners. One of these dealt with prepositions and the other with adjectives. Each had been supplied to the school by the Western Cape Education Department. Examples of sentences from each of these are provided below:

1. *Mary is a (truth) girl.*
2. *The present was (expense)*
3. *The present was (use)*
4. *The spoon was (wood)*

1. *Come and play \_\_\_\_\_ us \_\_\_\_\_ our house.*
2. *John came \_\_\_\_\_ our house \_\_\_\_\_ a visit.*
3. *The oak tree was struck \_\_\_\_\_ lightning \_\_\_\_\_ a storm.*
4. *We hid \_\_\_\_\_ a tree \_\_\_\_\_ our pursuers.*

In a subsequent interview the teacher said that she thought these worksheets were useful "because they were simple and straightforward".

The 'common' and 'good enough' practices found in the project teachers' classroom practices can be contrasted with those provided in the third column labelled 'best' practices.

### **'Best' practices**

Two recent policy documents have been useful in developing an understanding of current national government perspectives and definitions of 'best' practices. These are the new curriculum for the Learning Area *Languages, Literacy and Communication* (September 1997)<sup>13</sup> which is part of the larger Outcomes Based Education and Training curriculum and the *Generic Guidelines for the Development of Learning Support Material for Outcomes Based Education and Training* (November 1997). Each of these documents provides a far more progressive picture of 'best' practices than those observed in either the project teachers' classrooms or even in the teachers' lesson objectives.

<sup>13</sup> While this new curriculum has not yet been implemented in this form in Grades 8 and 9, the specific outcomes are useful in providing a framework for an understanding of 'best' practices.

The first of these documents lists seven specific outcomes (1997 : 27-40) for the learning area Languages, Literacy and Communication. These are:

1. Learners make and negotiate meaning and understanding.
2. Learners show critical awareness of language usage.
3. Learners respond to the aesthetic, affective, cultural and social values in texts
4. Learners access, process and use information from a variety of sources and situations.
5. Learners understand, know and apply language structures and conventions in context.
6. Learners use language for learning.
7. Learners use appropriate communication strategies for specific purposes and situations.

The understanding of language that underpins and informs these specific outcomes draws on multiple literacies - such as cultural literacy, critical literacy, visual literacy, media literacy - and which stresses the importance of texts being interpreted within contexts - such as linguistic and extralinguistic contexts. This approach contrasts with much of the project teachers' work where "trivial ways of studying language which have no connection with life" were frequently observed (Richards in Postman & Weingartner 1975 : 104).

The document also proposes a view of language not as an end in itself but as "a means for acting in the world in order to establish relationships, to engage with others in reciprocal exchange, to integrate new knowledge into existing knowledge, to obtain and convey ideas and information" (1997: 24). The importance of language across the curriculum is stressed. Again the contrasts between these ideas and the project teachers' work are evident. In the latter, lessons were frequently presented as discrete learning packages, without linkages to previous lessons or to learners' own experiences and prior knowledge being made. Few opportunities for reciprocal exchange were provided.

Only two or three of the seven specific outcomes listed above were found in the project teachers' lessons or in their lesson objectives - and these were only partially evident. For example, specific outcome number 1 - "Learners make and negotiate meaning and understanding" - found expression in the emphasis that the project teachers gave to the meaning of vocabulary. In doing so, they relied on transmission methods rather than encouraging learners to make and negotiate their own meanings either individually or collectively. The teachers' meaning or the meaning of the text as mediated by the teacher predominated.

Specific outcome 5 - "Learners understand, know and apply language structures and conventions in context" - found expression in an emphasis on grammar in the observed lessons. The learning of grammar did not require learners' understanding of structures but rote learning of rules, definitions and conventions. These were often learned in isolation rather than within meaningful contexts. This approach to learning language required limited interaction between teachers and learners - mostly question and answer drills - and even less between the learners themselves.

Specific outcome 4 found limited expression in certain project teachers' work. For example, two teachers made use of newspaper articles and a number made use of cartoons taken from

magazines. Generally, however, the use of textbooks, networks and worksheets predominated in the observed lessons.

Particularly lacking in the project teachers' work were specific outcomes 2 and 3. This may have been as a result of the project teachers' own conceptions of English-second language teaching and the associated emphasis on transmitted meaning and grammar. In addition, it may have been as a result of the teachers' own (often inadequate) grasp of English.

The notion of language as a social construct and as a powerful tool for shaping thinking was absent in the observed lessons. Teachers appeared to lack a critical awareness of language and therefore did not encourage a reflective attitude in learners through interpretative work. This was despite the fact that certain networks used by the teachers in the project lent themselves to an exploration of different language usages. Even where teachers commented on these differences, they did not introduce the differences as a point of reference in their lessons.

In this study, there was little evidence of language teaching across the curriculum - as required in specific outcome 6 - even when the teachers taught other subjects in addition to English second-language. For example, in the lesson based on the passage "The Life Cycle of a Frog", no cross-curricular linkages were made by the teacher who also taught Biology in this school. The generally more passive role required of learners by the project teachers meant that they had little practice in active communication. Their role was limited to listening to the teacher, answering questions posed by the teachers and/or the texts and following instructions. Teacher training in appropriate methods and skills for facilitating interaction in pairs and in small groups would be necessary in order to help most of these teachers meet the specific outcome 7.

As to be expected, the second of the two policy documents - the *Generic Guidelines for the Development of Learning Support Material for Outcomes Based Education and Training* - draws on a similar conception of language as that found in Curriculum 2005. In addition, a conception of 'best' teaching and learning practices is also contained in this document. Once again, this conception is far more 'progressive' than those underlying the practices observed in the project classrooms and/or in the teacher's own lesson objectives.

This document advocates "an appropriate variety of learning and teaching approaches" (1997: 10) which will encourage the development of "a range of skills and abilities" (op cit : 9). 'Best' teaching practices are seen as those which introduce a "range of learning opportunities" as well as "opportunities for the practice of various skills" (op cit : 19-20). This is in contrast to the fixed methods and coded practices observed in project teachers' classrooms where limited opportunities were given to learners to practise new skills.

Learners' responsibility for learning - and even for assessment - is stressed. For example, learners are described as needing to be "active participants in the learning process" who can "take responsibility for their own learning" (op cit : 10). Materials developers, therefore, are encouraged to provide opportunities for learners to "self-assess" their work and to "explore their own learning processes" (op cit : 8).

The writers of the document also advocate a "balance between guided (facilitated with a tutor or teacher) and self-instruction (self-motivated, self-driven projects etc) to allow learners freedom to explore their own interests" (op cit : 15). The importance of developing "social group and interpersonal relations" (op cit : 9) is highlighted.

Whole-class teaching - rather than individual or group work - predominated in the lessons observed during the course of this project. Teachers were central to all the activities and, as a result, learners played the more passive role associated with transmission teaching. This contrasts with 'best' teaching practices outlined in this document - i.e. those which "engage the intended learners", allow for "self-paced work" and "make reference and give credit for learners' prior knowledge and experience" (op cit : 16).

The importance of learners identifying problems and solving these by collecting, manipulating and presenting information (op cit : 20) is highlighted. 'Best' teaching practices and the use of appropriate learning materials are described as being able to "stimulate curiosity and create a desire for investigating", to involve learners in "innovative ways of working, divergent problem-solving, anticipating, designing, imagining, abstracting, evaluating, creative thinking, and the ability to search for information" (op cit : 10). In addition, it is suggested that materials be relevant to learners, their situations and needs. The authentic demands of the subject area outside of the school situation - i.e. its relevance to the real world - is stressed.

The need to differentiate between groups of learners with respect to their "capability of attainment", languages and cultures and the importance of providing different "possible routes through" the materials is also mentioned. No differentiation was made by the project teachers in teaching their classes and it is unlikely that these teachers would be able to work with texts which required such differentiation without prior training.

Both of these policy documents reflect some of the key concepts found in progressive educational theories. Critical pedagogies criticise the "banking" model (Freire : 1972) of teaching and learning which reduces teaching to "management pedagogics" (Giroux : 1988). The banking concept posits knowledge as external to individuals and controlled by those who have the power to define and categorise social reality.

Associated with instrumental reasoning, this model of education assumes that there is a common framework of experience for all people. The immediate, measurable and methodological aspects of teaching and learning are emphasised. Rather than viewing the classroom as "a cultural terrain where a heterogeneity of discourses often collide in an unremitting struggle for dominance, schooling is often encountered as a set of rules and regulative practices which have been laundered of ambiguity, contradiction, paradox and resistance. Schools are presented as if they are free of all vestiges of contestation, struggle and cultural politics. Classroom reality is rarely ambiguity, contradiction, paradox and resistance. Schools are presented as if they are free of all vestiges of contestation, struggle and cultural politics. Classroom reality is rarely presented as socially constructed, historically determined and mediated through institutionalised relationships of class, gender, race and power" (Giroux & McLaren in Popkewitz 1987 : 273).



According to Parker and Deacon, approximately 80% of South African teachers have been inculcated into Fundamental Pedagogics<sup>14</sup> (1993 : 132), a form of social reproduction in that teachers are trained as civil servants and operate in the interests of the state to sustain and legitimate the status quo. Fundamental Pedagogics encourages utilitarian teaching perspectives where teaching is separated from its ethical, political and moral roots. Knowledge is viewed as something that is detached from the human interactions through which it is constituted and by which it is maintained. The technique of teaching becomes an end in itself rather than a means towards some articulated, reasoned educational purpose. Few opportunities are given for learners to develop the power to reflect upon the specific ideological and material conditions within and outside the schools and how these shape and constrain what is offered in the curriculum.

For graduates of teacher education programmes based on Fundamental Pedagogics, becoming a teacher requires solely mastering the particular corpus of knowledge and the associated skills that are distributed through the rituals of teacher education. The message that is communicated to prospective teachers is that being a teacher means identifying knowledge that is certain, breaking it into manageable bits and transmitting it to students in an efficient fashion. Textbooks are treated as codifications of knowledge which contain the consensually accepted and, therefore, non-problematic knowledge of a field. Since knowledge is viewed as logical and unrelated to culture and social conditions, it becomes reified and remains uncontested.

Being a learner means acquiring this knowledge and learning how to use it in a context which does not include criticism or analysis. Instead, learning is reduced to the mastery of accepted definitions of knowledge in a fixed field, and measurement and testing are emphasised. In essence, this is the form of pedagogy that characterises transmission teaching and learning. Critical theory, starting as it does from a critique of ideology, offers a very different view of knowledge and of teaching and learning. Underlying the process of critique is the concept that existing social structures and beliefs are socially constructed and, therefore, changeable through social action. Critical educational theories and teacher education programmes encourage teachers to become self-consciously aware of distorted knowledge - the first step towards enlightenment, a necessary precondition for individual freedom and self-determination.

In progressive educational theory, curriculum is also viewed as a social construction. "The knowledge that is chosen and how it is organised involves profound and complex questions about our human conditions and patterns of social conduct" (Popkewitz 1992 : 340). The politics of the curriculum - and whose interests it serves - forms a vital aspect of teacher education programmes based on critical pedagogics. The view of the teacher as classroom manager is replaced by the more emancipatory model of the teacher as a critical theorist. (Giroux and McLaren in Popkewitz 1992: 268).

<sup>14</sup> Fundamental Pedagogics formed (and, in some cases, still forms) the basis of teacher education programmes at the majority of historically black colleges of education as well as at some universities and technikons.

A critical study of language is a core feature of progressive teacher education programmes since, it is argued, the analysis of language reveals codes of culture in which power relations are embedded. Language studies enable learners to become "more knowledgeable about and sensitive to the omnipresence and power of language as constitutive of their experience" (Giroux and McLaren in Popkewitz 1992: 280). Such studies encourage them to interrogate the numerous codes and signifiers that are constitutive of texts" (Giroux and McLaren op cit). The critical qualities associated with scholarship require learners to move "beyond the assumptions and practices of the existing order. It is a struggle against our cultural givens. The categories, assumptions and practices of everyday life of an institution are to be made problematic" (Popkewitz 1992: 350). On the other hand, the more conservative and technical traditions associated with transmission teaching "eclipse opportunities for more sustained reflective analysis (Giroux and McLaren in Popkewitz 1992: 301).

The view that education needs to be part of a wider political project has had considerable appeal in South Africa in the last two decades - particularly in historically white universities where the development of teachers as critical practitioners has been central. The view that schooling is "fundamentally an ethical and empowering enterprise dedicated to the fostering of democracy, to the exercise of greater social justice, and the building of a more equitable social order" (Giroux and McLaren in Popkewitz 1992 : 269) has been adopted. The catch words 'emancipation', 'empowerment' and 'transformation' fuelled the move towards the introduction of action research and reflective practice. Teachers have been described as "agents of transformation" (Davidoff & van den Berg 1991 : 30-33) and viewed not only as "cultural workers in classrooms" but as key players or agents in the transformation of society (Giroux & McLaren in Popkewitz 1987 : 285). Walker, for example, wrote: "I assumed that practitioner engagement in action research would logically (and inevitably) develop into critical reflection on schooling and society. My own writing at that time reveals a confident assumption that the action research process has the 'potential to re-insert teacher agency into the struggle within education for the transformative schools, which aim to transform self and the social relations ... rather than simply reproducing them'" (Walker 1993 : 97).

It is interesting to note that a number of the project teachers had attended teacher education programmes at institutions where the 'best' practices ideal may well have been prominent. What we most frequently observed, however, were practices based on years of custom and habit - i.e. coded practices. This observation supports the view that pedagogical tradition carries more weight than research-based evidence on effective teaching techniques and that this tendency is reinforced by student teachers' immersion in the realities of school after graduation. The learning acquired about teaching in teacher education programmes is easily shrugged off once newly qualified teachers close the classroom door (Labaree 1992 : 139)".

Many of the ideals that underpin critical pedagogics are now reflected in recent policy documents in South Africa. However, as outlined in this section of the report, these ideals are

<sup>15</sup> Labaree cites the results of Larry Cuban's study which examined the pedagogical practices of United States elementary and secondary school teachers. Cuban found that it was remarkably imperious to the kind of pedagogy urged upon them as part of their teacher education.

often far removed from teachers' everyday realities. The implications of this situation and recommendations for closing the gaps between the three broad repertoires of practices are explored in the final section of the report.

## SECTION D

### CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The final section of this report provides some concluding comments on the three broad repertoires of practices outlined in the previous section. In addition, some implications and recommendations for teacher in-service education, materials provision and materials development are made. These should be understood as tentative suggestions for two reasons. Firstly, there are dangers in taking a too definitive a position and basing recommendations on a sample of only four schools and seven teachers. Secondly, the project has raised further questions, some of which require further investigation before any policy decisions can be taken. This project is best understood as an initial exploration of the relationships between different kinds of classroom materials and teachers' practices in an effort to determine if and how materials drive practice. One of its chief values has been the identification and development of the three broad repertoires of practices between which there are significant - although sometimes subtle - differences. An understanding of these repertoires facilitates a comparison of teaching and learning practices as well as materials and their usage.

One of the most important conclusions of this study is that it is the individual teacher, rather than the materials used, that is the significant determinant in the materials/practice relationship. In addition, it is important to understand that the individual teacher is influenced by a number of institutional and personal factors. These influences affect each teacher's practices as well as the choice and usage of materials which support these practices. If the gaps between the three repertoires of practices are to be closed these factors need to be addressed.

#### **Closing the gaps**

Helping teachers to close the gaps between their lesson objectives and classroom practices needs to be the first order of business. In other words this is the first stage towards the establishment of 'best' practices. This, in itself, will be a difficult task since it also involves changes in many other elements in the wider school environment or institutional context. Popkewitz highlights the "potency of an institutional context not only for channelling thought and action, but also for reinforcing and legitimating social values" (1981 : 189). He draws on Foucault to argue that "the structural relations that are part of the organisation of social life" also become part of "the conceptions of self so that individuals engage in their own self-regulation" (Popkewitz 1987 : 219). Thus institutionalised structures come to shape possibilities for individuals.

The institutional and personal factors that constrained the project teachers were closely linked. For example, those teachers who had not qualified as English second-language teachers - but who had been placed in these teaching positions - struggled with their lack of content knowledge and lack of confidence. Their lack of training and support was exacerbated by the lack of teamwork and collegiality within the schools where teachers worked mostly in isolation.

Not only did they work according to their own agendas but in some schools there was considerable conflict amongst staff members. This lack of cohesion contributed to the lack of enthusiasm for and commitment to teaching and learning evident in some classrooms. The poor physical conditions of schools, the lack of security and inappropriate and outdated classroom materials did nothing to motivate teachers.

Helping teachers to move from "common" practices to "good enough" practices and then 'best' practices requires that they learn to "teach against the grain" (Simon 1992). The difficulties involved in such work have been highlighted in a study which focused on the complex relationships between theory and practice in five teachers' work. Seven interdependent factors or "components of power" were described as contributing to "teachers' power identities" which, it was argued, were crucial in enabling teachers to begin and then sustain the work demanded in developing coherent theory-practice relationships (Wickham 1997).

### **Recommendations for in-service teacher development**

The following recommendations are provided as suggestions which could facilitate closing the gaps between the three broad repertoires of practices. They are based on the belief that while education in South Africa needs to be "involved in the production of that which is not yet" (Simon 1992: 14), future policy and action for school improvement need to take cognisance of the realities of teachers such as those in the four project schools.

This argument is based on an incremental view of both social and personal change rather than that of 'workshop conversion'. In addition, it reflects the idea that 'best' practices requires the ability to make discretionary judgements and the flexibility to move appropriately between different repertoires of practices.

Familiarity with all three broad repertoires of practices would be necessary for designers and presenters of in-service teacher development courses and programmes based on this view. The first stage of such programmes - that which has as its aim 'good enough' practices - would give emphasis to teaching methods and an understanding of the underlying theory, as well as skills and content knowledge. The second stage - that which has as its aim 'best' practices - would stress theoretical and professional development so as to provide a stronger basis for discretionary judgement and flexibility.

The need for an organisational approach to teacher development is clear. Establishing good management and leadership structures and a strong vision for the school within the wider educational environment are fundamental to improving teachers' practices in the classroom. Some of the skills noted as requiring attention in in-service teacher development programmes are listed below:

- Contextualising lessons within broader frameworks
- Developing strategies for capturing learners' interest
- Developing and asking sharper and more focused questions

- Providing clearer explanations and instructions
- Listening and responding more fully to learners' responses to questions
- Encouraging learners to formulate their own questions
- Helping learners to unpack and demystify questions and explanations
- Providing learners with opportunities to practise or rehearse new knowledges and skills
- Risking new practices
- Developing a wider range of activities for learners - e.g. sifting, sorting, analysing, thinking and relating
- Building greater enjoyment and excitement in learning activities
- Providing relevant examples
- Varying the pace
- Providing a sense of urgency (in essence - direction, clarity and purpose)

It is anticipated that the development of these skills will facilitate greater learner engagement and more active participation and interaction in classrooms.

### **Recommendations for materials provision**

The research team has had to conclude that there is little to be gained in providing classroom materials to schools that lack the infrastructure to ensure their effective use. A predictable timetable around which lessons can be planned with teachers and learners in class long enough to engage in teaching and learning, secure classrooms in a satisfactory state of repair, secure storage facilities, cleaned-up bookrooms, increased teacher and learner discipline are all important aspects in creating a functioning school. Fundamental to all of these is good leadership and management.

In addition, it is likely that little would be gained in providing classroom materials to schools without providing appropriate training to teachers on how to use these materials. The data from this study suggests that teachers use textbooks in terms of their established or coded practices rather than according to the material developer's vision. As a result, materials written to 'best' practices are often not used by the teacher in the ways intended since they select materials which they see as matching their stated lesson objectives. Without training, it is likely that they will simply continue to use new materials in old ways.

While there are those who argue for a diversity of texts in schools, such a policy will not necessarily lead to improved teaching practices. Once again, the data from this study suggests that teachers choose excerpts from different books to suit their teaching practices rather than in ways intended by the writers. It is possible that by using one or two good classroom texts, teachers will be encouraged to contextualise their practices and to develop a range of teaching styles. This, of course, requires that the materials themselves help teachers and learners to locate their work in a context.

The research team frequently observed lessons which would have been improved had a good textbook been used. The various functions of the textbook have been described in the following

way : "The textbook is a versatile tool for both the teacher and the learner. Textbooks support teachers in several ways: they contain lesson material in graded sequence; they help to structure and organise the learning experience of the class; they assist the teacher in the daily task of preparing lesson plans; and they provide recapitulatory material and exercises to test progress. For the student, textbooks can be conveniently carried from school to home and provide a summary record of each lesson.

Since textbooks are also based on a conception of the relationships and processes in teaching and learning, they can function as a guide to teaching practices. They can also provide reference information and help students make links between what they learn in school and their apprehension of the outside world" (Fernig, McDougal and Ohlman in Farrell & Heyneman 1993:197).

Although it was not the focus of this project, other research studies have investigated the impact of textbook provision on learner performance. For example, in evaluating the impact of the Phillipies textbook project it was noted that "students who used textbooks achieved more than those who did not; and those who used project textbooks achieved more than those who used other textbooks. Further, the project textbook users performed generally better than the nonusers did on test items that measured higher and more complex learning. And students who used the new textbook series consistently over several years achieved more than those who did not.

"The results also showed that books might have contributed to equalising educational opportunity. The learning gap separating higher-achieving students of higher socio-economic status from lower-achieving poorer students appeared to have been reduced by the use of the project textbooks. The rate of achievement was faster and the gains greater among children in the rural areas than among their counterparts in the semi-urban central schools and the cities" (de Guzman in Farrell & Heynemann 1993 :168-169).

While textbook policies "must ensure that all pupils have access to a book", this "does not necessarily mean that there have to be as many books as pupils" (Orivel in Brunswic 1990 : 67). In the Philippines project one book was distributed to and shared by every two pupils. The results of these pupils, when compared to those of a control group in which every pupil received a book, were not significantly different. "Experts agree that under circumstances of severe shortage, one textbook for every three pupils is a minimum threshold" (Brunswic et al 1990 17).

### **Recommendations for materials development**

The recommendations for the provision of materials such as textbooks (alongside the development of the infrastructures of schools and the provision of appropriate training for teachers) should not be viewed as advocating textbook dependency and utilitarian teaching practices - features associated with Fundamental Pedagogics. Here teachers were reduced to the role of "classroom manager" (Giroux & McLaren in Popkewitz 1987: 268) and teaching required no more than a form of transmission of information - from teacher and textbook to

learner. The notion of 'teacher-proof texts' was not uncommon. The arguments against textbooks in this country need to be understood in this historical context and not dismissed. Rather, the development of textbooks which speak to both the teachers and the learners are required.

The following suggestions are provided as food for thought for those involved in materials development.

Firstly, as encouraged in the policy documents reviewed in Section C, materials need to build a range of teaching and learning styles through providing a variety of activities. Secondly, the three repertoires of practices described in this report need to be borne in mind so that the activities will enable teachers to move from their current positions - 'common' practices - to achieving their lesson objectives - 'good enough' practices - and on to 'best' practices. In other words, teaching materials need to be recognisable to teachers and to reflect at least some of the practices with which they are familiar.

For example, any of the teachers participating in this project would have been comfortable with a comprehension passage followed by questions on that passage. A 'best' practices materials developer may be tempted to provide a passage followed by an activity where learners set the questions themselves. It is unlikely that many of the project teachers would have felt sufficiently comfortable to try this approach. It is too new and alienating. They would, however, be open to using a comprehension where the questions had been printed *above* the text, introducing the idea that learners need to know what they are reading a passage for before they begin. The inclusion of such an activity would be a reason for providing teacher's notes explaining the theory underlying the idea of reading for meaning.

Thirdly, it is also important that materials developers understand learners' realities and the strategies they adopt to deal with these. This will better enable them to provide materials that capture their attention - the setworks *Love David* and *Tolly, Hero of Hanover Park* mentioned earlier are useful examples. Finally, materials developers need to develop materials that can withstand the challenges of school and classroom contexts including teachers' sometimes idiosyncratic use of them.

### **Recommendations for further research**

This current project has begun to explore the relationships between different kinds of classroom materials and teachers' practices in an effort to determine if and how materials drive practice. A longer-term follow-up study is currently being planned. This will provide the opportunity to test the major conclusions of this project - i.e. that it is the individual teacher, rather than the

materials themselves, that is the significant determinant in materials/practice relationships. This study will focus on the effects of training and support in materials selection and usage on teachers' practices. In effect, the research question will be: If appropriate materials and relevant training are provided, do teachers move from 'common' practices to 'good enough' practices and on to 'best' practices? Tracing changes in teacher development will also be linked to an



'investigation of different kinds of kinds of training - for example that which publishers are currently providing with their new materials.

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