CHAPTER 5

THE STRUGGLE TO TRANSFORM:
ESTABLISHING NEW DISCURSIVE PRACTICES

Teachers can gain sustenance and encouragement from relatively casual social interactions that do not include discussion about more sensitive subjects like how one is teaching. Real support for shared goals, coordinated curriculum, and improved practice requires a level of interaction that is rare. (Firestone, 1996, p. 403)

After the teachers had taken up collaboration, the processes they went through in their participatory communities to shift their practice from isolation to collaboration were ones of struggle. Fairclough (1991) would suggest that this was crucial, as he argues it is only through struggles that discourses become real or “socially operative” (p. 140). The implication for the research is that teacher collaboration as a social practice could only become real, establish new discursive practices and have the possibility of transforming classroom practices through processes of struggle. This chapter details the nature of these struggles and the new discursive practices that emerged in the six schools as the outcomes of those struggles.

Teachers in the six schools positioned themselves in different ways in relation to the struggle to transform practice; their position to a large extent was dependent on the cognitive resources or “members’ resources” (MR) (Fairclough, 1991, p. 24) that they brought to the production and interpretation of the practice of teacher collaboration. The struggles were clustered around three common issues, which established new discursive practices in the six schools. The first struggle related to how the teachers tried to establish more collaborative social relationships with each other in their participatory communities. The outcome of this particular struggle was a new discursive practice that established the norms and conventions of teacher collaboration as a new social practice in the six
project schools. Essentially this struggle set the scene for two other struggles the first of which was characterised by the teachers trying to develop a collaborative understanding of the new outcomes-based curriculum (OBE), an understanding that was aimed at enhancing their potential to successfully implement OBE in their classrooms. The second struggle related to the teachers’ efforts to establish school-based collaborative support mechanisms that could enhance the process of curriculum change in each of the six schools. Through using Fairclough’s (1991) stage of interpretation to analyse these struggles, new curriculum roles that teachers collaboratively developed as a means to implement OBE in their classrooms are made explicit. The analytical themes of curriculum authority, curriculum knowledge and curriculum leadership are used to support the arguments developed in this chapter.

TRANSFORMING SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS

Up to the time when the teachers took up collaboration as a new social practice, the practice in the six schools had been characterised by activities that took place predominantly in isolation. The isolated nature of teaching has been well documented, for example: Lortie (1975) wrote about how expert teachers lose professional and personal contact with other people as a result of their isolation; Goodlad (1984) researched how isolation fragmented the work of teachers; and, Lieberman and Miller (1984) theorised about the “ultimate parody” (p. 91) of teachers’ lives, which have the appearance of collectivity, but the reality of isolation. This parody results in a definition of teachers’ work being restricted to what teachers do when they are in their classrooms, and portrays the work of teachers as being confined to profoundly individual and lonely activities. This characteristic began to change in the President’s Schools as a result of the take up of collaboration as a new social practice; this in turn impacted on the nature of the social relations that existed between the teachers. The transformation from isolation to collaboration was not an easy one to make and the teachers
positioned themselves discursively as supporters of, or resistors to, that change. This section analyses these discursive positions.

Some of the teachers who supported the transformation of practice from isolation to collaboration refused to acknowledge that any resistance to this shift existed. For example, in two different interviews conducted at Mutshetshe it was said:

There has been no resistance in this school from any teachers (Focus Group Interview Number 1, Mutshetshe School, MM2, 4 August 1998).

There has been no resistance. All are positive and there are no secrets. We have meetings to help each other. (Focus Group Interview Number 2, Mutshetshe School, ET, 4 August 1998)

Generally the teachers who supported the shift towards collaboration did acknowledge the existence of some form of resistance in their schools. But this resistance was expressed in terms of personal problems that resistant teachers had, rather than in terms of there being any challenges associated with teacher collaboration as a new social practice. These personal problems included there being something ‘lacking’ in the resistant teachers, or resistant teachers being ‘abnormal’, ‘lazy’, ‘scared’ or even ‘ignorant’. This personalisation of resistance was evident in all of the schools, with the exception of Mutshetshe where, as it has already been shown, all forms of resistance were denied. For example:

EM2: They [teachers] won’t come [to work] here [in the participatory community] because we work too hard.

PS: They lack commitment and confidence. Even if they are interested, our standards are too high. (Focus Group Interview Number 2, Baropodi School, 13 May 1998)

There was one person in our group who found OBE too difficult. He asked, “Why don’t you teach like other schools?” But we were all trained in another method, but he couldn’t learn. He took up a post in another school. (Focus Group Interview Number 1, Khomisani School, BM, 3 August 1998)
WM1: A normal person must accept a change. I say this because some educators are ignoring a change that you are giving us....

EB1: I get de-motivated by a lack of co-operation between the teachers working together as a group. In my grade, teachers don’t work hand-in-hand. But we can’t do this alone [we] need to help each other in groups....

LM: Why do you think that some teachers don’t want to work together?

EB1: I can say they are lazy, or they refuse to change to the new system of teaching, maybe they are ignorant....

WM1: Some teachers say they are not sure of what they are doing. The lesson planning is so difficult. They talk about their confusion.

(Focus Group Interview Number 2, Khomisani School, 3 August 1998)

LM: How do you know if a teacher is resistant?

PM1: It means that they lack orientation from those who understand it. They also need courage and workshops.

PL: Some resist because they are scared of something. Resistance can equal fear. If you don’t understand something you can fear it. Make them understand in such a way that they will change.

(Focus Group Interview Number 1, Lejatji School, 12 May 1998)

SL: OBE is too demanding. Some teachers are too lazy to prepare their lessons...

SM3: I sometimes feel discouraged when some of the teachers don’t co-operate. Especially when we plan lessons and they give excuses to go [to leave the meeting].

EM3: And even after planning [lessons], some will not follow the plan [in their classrooms].

(Focus Group Interview Number 2, Mashamba School, 27 May 1998)

All teachers want to be part of the working groups. But it needs trust and we don’t trust each other yet....In order to feel part of the working situation, we should not look at OBE as one dominant teacher. Because it hampers progress and disturbs those willing to help and demotivates them. It also creates cliques with staff members.

(Focus Group Interview Number 2, Nwaxinyamani School, MM1, 28 May 1998)

The teachers who actively supported collaboration had a rather naive notion about how they could transform resistance into support. They assumed that as resistance was only due to a lack of understanding on the part of some of their colleagues, that this resistance would automatically disappear once those teachers were given more information. This position did not necessarily allow them to consider other possible practices in their schools, nor did it encourage
them to critique the relevance of this form of collaboration in their schools and the potential problems it could have on their practice. For example:

SN2: I have heard people say, “OBE is now becoming more interesting.” They are grasping the new approach and find it challenging and interesting. This was after we [teachers in the participatory community] explained it and discussed schemes of work and lessons....

SN3: We encourage each other, more specifically when we discuss in groups. Some [teachers] still don’t understand, and we tell them that change takes time....

SN2: Resistance is limited. They [resistant teachers] have no chance. In our groups we clarify them about OBE and can answer questions. (Focus Group Interview Number 1, Khomisani School, 3 August 1998)

All that was needed is we try to advise teachers, “If you do this on your own, you may have problems, and how would you know that you have problems?” And that, to develop it further, sometimes you don’t get to observe [other teachers’ lessons], maybe only the principal [does]. But as long as you know what you are doing, you can accept as others come to observe....And I think, for the teachers who were a little bit slow in coming [to support OBE], I think teachers should come together themselves and do something about OBE. They should use it first, engage with it, and if they see something, do it. In OBE, we can do it, here at this school. Unlike saying something is bad before it is applied. (Focus Group Interview Number 2, Letjatji School, WK, 12 May 1998)

Only a few resisted. They could be identified by their actions. But as time passed, we were all happily involved. (Focus Group Interview Number 2, Mashamba School, SM3, 27 May 1998)

The outcome of this particular struggle was that the practice of teacher collaboration became a privileged practice in the six schools, a shift that effectively silenced any resistance that may still have remained. The supportive teachers discursively produced the privileged position of collaboration in a variety of ways:

There was no teamwork in the past, but in OBE we have to work together (Focus Group Interview Number 1, Khomisani School, TB, 3 August 1998).
AM: No teacher works in isolation...
BS Without co-operation and discipline, we wouldn’t be where we are today. If we don’t co-operate, we would be teaching a different and wrong thing. And, if my colleague fails to come to school, I can teach his class. If someone goes astray, we can help. (Focus Group Interview Number 1, Mashamba School, 27 May 1998)

The processes embedded in this struggle to transform practice established new social relations between the teachers and created the norms and conventions of teacher collaboration in the six schools. Just as Huberman (cited in Fullan, 1992) suggests when he says that, “implementation creates interdependence between members of an institution” (p. 123), the teachers in the participatory communities began to depend on each other in new and unique ways and this inter-dependency impacted on the social relationships in the participatory communities. The traditional definition of how teachers worked in schools changed and the participatory communities came to be characterised throughout the teachers’ discourse by concepts like ‘helping’, ‘harmony’, ‘positive attitudes’, ‘sharing’, ‘confidence’, ‘friendship’ and ‘co-operating’. The nurturing aspect of teacher collaboration was evident in all of the schools. For example:

We help each other....We help each other in selecting themes and topics....We have to come together to do that. (Focus Group Interview Number 2, Baropodi School, LM1, 13 May 1998)

SN2: One other difficulty [with OBE] is this new terminology. There is a lot of it and the format for [lesson] preparation is difficult to understand. But it promotes harmony by working together. We don’t need to work alone. It is easier for a teacher to have more courage; you can ask your friend if you don’t understand.
SN3: Working together promotes inquisitiveness, a wanting to know more. We all bring different types of information to be discussed at different levels. We are encouraged to want to explore more. Our contact with SHC helps. Also, school management lets us arrange our own lessons. (Focus Group Interview Number 1, Khomisani School, 3 August 1998)

What are important are attitudes. People must have a positive attitude for them to succeed. You need to know each other. There is no change with a negative attitude (Focus Group Interview Number 1, Letjatji School, PL, 12 May 1998).
Teaching is sharing and working together....We want to observe the good things we have. We want a group of teachers, sharing. As long as after we come back and say, “That was good, here’s how to improve your work.” (Focus Group Interview Number 2, Letjatji School, WK, 12 May 1998)

But we are no longer shy; we are free and gain confidence by working together. We try to advise each other and help sort out problems. (Focus Group Interview Number 2, Mashamba School, EM3, 27 May 1998)

MR: OBE creates friendships among the teachers. We share ideas when preparing together, then we teach them. A Grade 4 teacher knows what is happening in Grades 5 to 7. It gives us a chance to work together and enriches our knowledge....

MM2: It is challenging for teachers, that OBE. It needs thorough preparation. You must prepare with a colleague because it is difficult to prepare a lesson alone. It needs the sharing of ideas....I love to use this curriculum here in our school because it leads me to have more friendships with my colleagues....

MR: I like to be here at school time and again. Because, concerning curriculum, we have to create new things for ourselves, suitable for our children and I like that.

TM3: As a teacher, I love Curriculum 2005 because when organising and preparing lessons in a scheme, the teachers at this school co-operate whole-heartedly. At the end, we find we have done something. It is very good. (Focus Group Interview Number 1, Mutshetshe School, 4 August 1998)

I must establish a new working relationship where we are all learning. None of us are sure and we need to share ideas to get a clear vision....Encourage them [teachers] to confide their problems in one they trust and be willing to solve....a problem, involve them in discussion. (Focus Group Interview Number 2, Nwaxinyamani School, MM1, 28 May 1998)

The participatory communities helped to create a situational context that established a socially supportive environment where many teachers felt comfortable enough to share their classroom experiences with each other. Space was created for the teachers to relate to each other in very positive social ways. For the first time the teachers had access to each other’s MR in terms of talking about the curriculum. This supportive relationship between teachers was unique in the context of rural schools in South Africa, where the legacy of apartheid, which devalued or even destroyed human relationships had been
particularly damaging (Derman and Poulteny, 1988). That this relationship began to change in the context of the participatory communities, and was expressed through the social practice of collaboration, was a profound shift in the traditional norms of practice in these rural schools. The discourse of isolation became backgrounded as increasingly more attention was paid to collaboration, the new foregrounded discourse.

However, questions still need to be asked about whether or not this form of teacher collaboration would lead to improvements in teaching practice, as it does seem as if the nurturing provision of “sustenance and encouragement” (Firestone, 1996, p. 403) was a privileged convention in the participatory communities. This could be more suggestive of teacher collegiality, which Lingard et al. (2001b) argue does not necessarily enhance teachers’ existing knowledge, nor does it lead to improvements in teaching and learning. The next section considers the extent to which the participatory communities were compatible with the “teacher professional communities” (Lingard, 2001b, p. 65) associated with improving teaching practice, or if they remained as supportive collegial groups.

TRANSFORMING CURRICULUM UNDERSTANDING

The teachers tried very hard to focus their discussions in the participatory communities on curriculum issues, but in order to do this they had to develop a collaborative understanding of teaching and learning within an OBE framework. This process brought its own set of struggles, as OBE as a curriculum model was very different to the curriculum model that this group of teachers had been schooled in and then trained on, namely fundamental pedagogics. These struggles caused the teachers to feel uncomfortable and insecure, conditions that Huberman (cited in Fullan, 1992) cautions are often experienced when teachers are involved in substantial shifts in their practice. While these early
feelings of insecurity were evident in all schools, they were soon replaced by positive feelings of accomplishment:

At the beginning, it [implementing the new curriculum] was de-motivating. But now that we have gone some steps - we see it working - now it is motivating. (Focus Group Interview Number 1, Baropodi School, VL, 13 May 1998)

PS: Teachers are not afraid to ask from their colleagues what they don’t understand….

LM1: At first I found it challenging [hard] but now I’ve realised that it is an interesting thing to teach….My attitude was that I was confused. I didn’t understand what was going on. (Focus Group Interview Number 2, Baropodi School, 13 May 1998)

We all bring different types of information to be discussed at different levels. We are encouraged to want to explore more. (Focus Group Interview Number 1, Khomisani School, SN2, 3 August 1998)

The first time we were workshopped to change the way we teach, it was difficult to take the message. But while experimenting with it in the classroom, we found, yes we can take it. But in the first place, it was difficult….The thing that tends to motivate me is that I’m also a learner in this curriculum. I need to search for information and need to be sure of what I am doing in the classroom. (Focus Group Interview Number 2, Khomisani School, EB1, 3 August 1998)

RM: We use each other’s talents. If I am poor, or unable to do it and need someone else, they can help me….

LS1: Aspects that motivate me, are working together. We are motivated about working together. In my classroom, if I feel, I come to my group, “Please help me!” Then we help each other. If I have a problem, there are people to help me. (Focus Group Interview Number 1, Letjatji School, 12 May 1998)

PM2: At the beginning, it [the new curriculum] was tough and most of us were complaining. But now we are used to it….

LM: Did you all find these shared activities interesting and worthwhile doing?

CR: For the first, I felt that it was too difficult. I was reluctant to try, there was too much preparation. But as time goes on, I found this thing [working collaboratively in a participatory community to implement OBE] was very important. That is what gave us courage. (Focus Group Interview Number 2, Letjatji School, 12 May 1998)
Our attitude has changed completely. I used only to have myself [to depend on] and so I stuck to my own subject. I had no chance to say, “Please help me!” I felt inferior. But now we are all at the same level. But it wasn’t easy to sit and discuss together at first. (Focus Group Interview Number 2, Mashamba School, EM4, 27 May 1998)

I think the advantages are that teachers are learning from each other. They also learn to share their ideas, they also practice co-operation. (Leadership Interview, Mashamba School, SM3, 13 October 1998)

MM2: Even when I am teaching, I can invite a teacher to observe in my class.
MR: OBE drives away all those fears that we had before. Anybody can come in and we teach without stage fright! (Focus Group Interview Number 1, Mutshetshe School, 4 August 1998)

IN: We also feel free to go to another teacher, if I am unable to teach something, for help…
MN: Even with drawing, if someone can’t draw, someone will help. (Focus Group Interview Number 2, Mutshetshe School, 4 August 1998)

I like it, but it is still new so it is difficult to follow (Focus Group Interview Number 2, Nwaxinyamani School, FM, 28 May 1998).

The teachers began to learn more about OBE as they engaged each other in discussions about pedagogy. Louis et al (1996) argue that when teachers engage in substantive conversations about teaching and learning, then they are involved in “schoolwide professional communities” (p. 179), and that this can have a positive impact on teaching and learning. Working together in this way, while initially very difficult for the teachers, did help to transform their understanding of curriculum. It also introduced new discourses into the participatory communities, in this case the discourse of curriculum authority and the discourse of curriculum knowledge. If one accepts that the characteristics of professional learning communities were evident in the participatory communities, then the focus must move to consider what the teachers learnt about together, how this new learning connected to what they already knew about teaching and learning, and what roles they developed for each other to implement this learning in their classrooms.
CURRICULUM AUTHORITY

The issue of curriculum authority in rural schools has a long history dating back to before the project began in 1997, a history characterised by authoritarianism and centralised control over educational decision-making (MacDonald, 1993). In 1997 teachers in the project were still experiencing the remnants of apartheid education, which had seen their daily professional lives being harshly controlled by what had been the racially segregated Department of Education and Training (DET). This control extended to an externally developed daily work programme that was sent to schools for all teachers to follow. This work programme, supported by officially prescribed textbooks, contained the content, the activities and the assessment that teachers were expected to use in each lesson. A teacher from Mutshetshe School reflected on this past situation, when he said:

We received ready-made materials compiled by somebody else who does not know whether they will be suitable to the environment of each school and we don’t have input on it (Focus Group Interview Number 1, Mutshetshe School, MR, 4 August 1998).

The locus of curriculum authority shifted dramatically in the project schools when teachers in the participatory communities began to rebel against the idea of an external authority figure prescribing yet another curriculum to them. Teachers in all of the schools began to resist the oppressive authority of the new bureaucracy as they experienced a growing tension with official rules and regulations. One quote is provided from each of the schools to illustrate this tension:

MB: The department says we have to do so many classworks, so many homeworks. They must take us out of the old system so we can see what we are doing.

SM2: We feel comfortable, but we are still possessed by the old system of teaching.
VL: The authorities of education still demand old work; they don’t believe that we are up to here in the syllabus when we do it like this [in an OBE style of teaching].

LM: What do you mean by ‘old’ work?

VL: The department still wants the [same] number of written works; this channels an educator to implement content-based lessons. Consideration is also given to tests and not to every [piece of] work of a learner....

JM2: Baropodi is a Presidential school. We should be exempt from all [official] requirements....The department pressurises us to stay in the old system....expect Baropodi to follow the same old system in which the performance of the teacher was judged by the quantity of the work he or she does....We are not part of the government, this curriculum is the government’s, we are not in the department, it is not fair to be part of the government’s plan. (Focus Group Interview Number 1, Baropodi School, 13 May 1998)

We sometimes differ with the department concerning promotion [official requirements for learners to proceed to the next grade]. They send us conditions that only Maths is used to decide on promotion. But we use English as the subject that has to be passed, Maths should not be a blockage [to passing]. But through discussion, they [departmental officials] understand that OBE requires such things. Also with regard to the pass mark, the department says 33,3%, but we make it 50% because of continuous assessment. (Focus Group Interview Number 1, Khomisani School, TB, 3 August 1998)

We avoid the old system of ten written classworks each month, not even considering the level of understanding of the learner. Just doing it speedy to please the principal and the department of education, but not really teaching it....Another challenge is in departmental directives, we defy them, as we have our own programme. (Focus Group Interview Number 2, Letjatji School, WK, 12 May 1998)

The department in our circuit [the departmental structure closest to schools] is very difficult. One of the circuit managers asked me, “Why are you doing that [OBE] in Grade 1 [when the official implementation is done by the department and not done by the project]?” I said, “No, I didn’t decide this alone.” They [circuit officials] only know Grade 1 work. We are advanced from Grade 1 to 7. Other schools come to us for help and the circuit feels inferior. (Focus Group Interview Number 2, Mashamba School, SM3, 27 May 1998)

We are not going to just do what we are told by the government. We will plan our own scheme of work. (Focus Group Interview Number 1, Mutshetshe School, MM2, 4 August 1998)
We get lots of instructions from the circuit that distract you. You are the one who has real contact with the learners. We can judge OBE, not them. (Focus Group Interview Number 2, Nwaxinyamani School, MM1, 28 May 1998)

This defiance of departmental regulations was also due in part to the perception the teachers had that education officials in the newly formed Limpopo Department of Education were not ‘knowledgeable’ enough concerning OBE. The teachers felt that the MR the project contributed to the process of helping them implement the new curriculum were more useful to them than the MR that departmental officials brought to the process. This point was made by a teacher from Letjatji when he indicated that the project, rather than the department, provided the kind of support that the teachers needed:

What is coming from the department, we get workshops from subject advisors [circuit officials responsible for in-service teacher development], but they don’t even understand it [OBE]. They just deliver something they don’t understand, unlike a person who really likes it and is excited. (Focus Group Interview Number 1, Letjatji School, PM1, 12 May 1998)

The shift from passively accepting official directives to seeing themselves as being the legitimate curriculum authorities was clearly apparent in the teachers’ discourse. The external authority figure became less important to the teachers as they began to view each other in their participatory communities more as creators of the curriculum, rather than deliverers of a curriculum formulated elsewhere. The teachers began to develop, negotiate and share an understanding of teaching and learning that became more important to them than the interpretation of outside curriculum experts. This development in the participatory communities resonates with the “communities of practice” (Ball and Cohen, 1999, p. 13; Wenger, 1998, p. 137) that are defined as groups of teachers who have a purpose grounded in the activities of practice.

It must, however, be noted that not all of the project teachers wanted to make this shift in curriculum authority, as some teachers still saw the Department of
Education as having that responsibility in their schools. In the words of one teacher:

The change of the curriculum should not be an individual issue. It should be decided on by learned people in the government. It is for teachers to accept it and implement it. We really trust them [department of education officials]. We do scrutinise the change, but we trust them….OBE should be accepted by the community, by the teachers concerned. When the department selects a new curriculum, we have to do it exactly [like the policy requires], because the inspectors [circuit officials] will check that we do it according to them. They say they will come back next year [to check what we are doing]. (Focus Group Interview Number 1, Khomisani School, SN3, 3 August 1998)

However, this position was refuted by the rather cynical comment of one of his colleagues who responded:

But an educated man can mislead us! As they say, “A one-eyed man is king in the land of the blind!” (Focus Group Interview Number 1, Khomisani School, SN2, 3 August 1998)

Resolving the struggle to understand OBE led the teachers to take ownership of the curriculum in their schools by asserting themselves authoritatively in their participatory communities. This authority was put into practice though two interrelated roles that the teachers developed to help them make curriculum decisions and then to implement those decisions in their classrooms; the roles of decision-maker and facilitator.

The role of the teacher as decision-maker

The role of the teacher as decision-maker was authoritative in the sense that it was related to the notion of personal empowerment that had emerged in South Africa in the latter half of the 1990s as a direct result of the process of political and social transformation. Making authoritative claims in terms of curriculum impacted directly on the teachers in terms of their practice in the six schools.
Teachers took responsibility for making decisions about a range of new and demanding curriculum activities in their schools. For example, they made decisions about the content of all their lessons, about the learning activities and assessment strategies they would use in their lessons, and pedagogical decisions about how lessons would be taught in the classroom. To do this well, the teachers needed to be in a position where they could make sophisticated and sound decisions about Bernstein’s (1971) three message systems of curriculum, pedagogy and evaluation, which he defined as:

Curriculum defines what counts as valid knowledge, pedagogy defines what counts as a valid transmission of knowledge, and evaluation defines what counts as a valid realisation of this knowledge on the part of the taught (p. 228).

As the following quotes suggest, many teachers found the process of making decisions about these message systems complex tasks that were compounded by the lack of resources in their rural schools:

MB:  We use the old system, to somehow ‘fit’ OBE. Our textbooks are old, we just have to select here and there so that the pupils know these things….

JM2:  It depends on the learning area, history is a problem. I don’t know how to prepare it because we have old textbooks.

VL:  We have to develop our own material for the children. (Focus Group Interview Number 1, Baropodi School, 13 May 1998)

But I am de-motivated by the lack of resources and materials. There is no syllabus. We use old textbooks. We try to convert the old books to OBE. (Focus Group Interview Number 2, Baropodi School, PS, 13 May 1998)

SN2:  We still use the same textbooks. But we try to use the main idea and adapt it....

BM:  OBE encouraged us to teach new things. We used to be reluctant to teach certain things in the past. (Focus Group Interview Number 1, Khomisani School, 3 August 1998)

LM:  What kinds of problems do you have associated with OBE?

JC:  Lack of training materials. Lack of resources, for example, teaching aids, laboratory equipment. OBE needs real practical work. (Focus Group Interview Number 2, Nwaxinyamani School, 28 May 1998)
It is not surprising that the teachers in the project found the decision-making processes around curriculum, pedagogy and evaluation difficult, as Cohen and Spillane (1992) argue that such sophistication is far beyond the reach of most teachers in the United States of America. In order to overcome these difficulties, the project teachers turned to each other for support and began to focus their decisions on the message system that they found the most manageable, namely Bernstein’s message system of pedagogy. This collaborative focus on pedagogy, with a specific reference to teaching techniques and the decisions associated with this focus, is illustrated in the following quotes:

SM3: OBE gives me the following choices....I am free to choose any method which is relevant to the activity. For example, I can choose group work, individual method, pairs or whole class. I am free to use time according to the demands of the lesson. For example, I am not bound to teach each and every lesson for thirty minutes only. I can choose twenty, thirty or sixty minutes. I am free to choose different learning activities like discussions, research, finding information in various resources....I am guided by learners’ level of learning. I also look at the outcomes that I want the learners to acquire....

CM: When preparing our lessons, we have provisions for learning activities, grouping them, each group chooses a leader, and the findings thereafter is expected to be given back the whole class by the group leader. After the reporting, or feedback, the summary is then given by the teacher as a round up. As a teacher I then give my learners a chance to paste their own summary or feedback reports on the classroom walls (Focus Group Interview Number 2, Mashamba School, 27 May 1998)

MM1: The teacher has the power, he is there to execute daily class activities and look for suitable methods that will best suit learners and parents.

SB: OBE is the simple method of teaching learners parts of speech, for example verbs, adverbs etc, in a week without dealing with one by one in your preparation. The learners can easily see how these parts of speech are used differently. (Focus Group Interview Number 2, Nwaxinyamani School, 28 May 1998)
The decisions the teachers made about practice together in their participatory communities were informed by their collective MR. As these MR were unused to making pedagogical decisions, the teachers privileged the process of making decisions over the actual decisions themselves. This privileging is illustrated in the following quotes:

We have to rely on our own decisions even if we don’t understand (Focus Group Interview Number 2, Baropodi School, PS, 13 May 1998).

AM: OBE makes decision-making easier. Decisions are taken on consensus….Sharing ideas makes decision-making easier….In OBE, teachers are responsible for [planning] the curriculum.

TM1: Discussing things in groups means we take genuine decisions. (Focus Group Interview Number 1, Mashamba School, 27 May 1998)

When a teacher goes to class, he goes with confidence. Everything you teach has been discussed before. (Focus Group Interview Number 1, Mutshetshe School, TM3, 4 August 1998)

Outcomes-based education inspires us….I don’t work alone, we work together. There is joint decision-making….We are confident of the decisions we make together. There are more decisions, and we are all accountable. (Focus Group Interview Number 1, Nwaxinyamani School, AN1, 28 May 1998)

Ball and Cohen (1999) argue that if teachers prepare lessons together, they broaden and diversify their knowledge and create opportunities to see new versions of practice. In the President’s Schools Project the teachers did plan their lessons together, but as has already been shown, this planning was privileged towards making decisions about teaching methods as pedagogy had become an authoritative discourse in the six schools. This privileging led to other equally important curriculum issues like knowledge and assessment becoming backgrounded or even ignored when the teachers made authoritative decisions about classroom practice.
The role of the teacher as facilitator

OBE as a new curriculum shifted attention from the process of teaching to the process of learning, and from the teacher to the learner. The following four quotes exemplify the manner in which this shift was expressed in teacher development booklets commissioned by the Department of Education:

The perception of teachers as dispensers of knowledge will also have to change to one where learners are valued as equal and active participants in learning and development processes (Department of Education, 1996a, p. 20).

In OBE teachers...are encouraged to find ways of providing conditions of success in the classroom....Teachers...will become facilitators rather than transmitters of knowledge. (Department of Education, 1997f, p. 28)

OBE advocates the learner-centred approach to teaching and learning. This means the focus is on learning, is on the outcomes themselves and on the performance. The focus is not on instruction. (Department of Education, undated a, p. 38)

The teacher, as opposed to being the repository of all knowledge and wisdom, must now facilitate and mediate the educational experience. (Department of Education, undated b, p. 12)

Amongst other things educators will: serve as mediators of meaning, by encouraging and stimulating construction and production of knowledge; serve as mediators of learning (Department of Education, 1997a, p. 17).

This shift meant that teachers were required to assume a more implicit, yet still crucial role in their classrooms, as their learners were becoming increasingly active participants in the learning process. The teachers’ roles in the classroom began to shift from the position of authoritative sources of knowledge to more facilitative positions. This role was not confined to official curriculum documents, as teachers in the project also saw themselves as facilitators with their attention focused on learning rather than on teaching. The following quotes show this understanding across each school:
SN1: Teachers are called facilitators now....My understanding of OBE is that gone are the days when teachers came to class to spoon-feed the pupils. In the past, teachers were encouraging the pupils to imitate, or rather to produce what he told them. So, according to me, it was very, very easy because the teacher was able to teach standing in the same position without moving. But now the teachers are facilitators, which means that they must help the learners to do projects in the classroom....

VL: Teacher is a facilitator, he can bring equity into the situation. There is no chalkboard under a tree, but you can do lessons under a tree, as a facilitator, you don’t need a chalkboard. (Focus Group Interview Number 1, Baropodi School, 13 May 1998)

In the past, only the teacher spoke in the classroom, while the children listened passively. Now a lot is given to the children, and the teacher is a facilitator. (Focus Group Interview Number 1, Khomisani School, TB, 3 August 1998)

The teacher has changed, now she is a facilitator. From an ordinary teacher to a facilitator. If you are teaching, you just give children knowledge you have, they will not learn. But if you facilitate, the children must acquire knowledge. (Focus Group Interview Number 2, Letjatjji School, JM1, 12 May 1998)

LM: What was the outcome of your lesson?
SL: The children must know that containers have different capacities. They are not all the same size. Also, before I would not have been aware of what I was teaching, I didn’t really have any aim before. I just taught without experiments, and didn’t tell them what the lesson was about. Now they know what they must achieve at the end of the lesson. You know, I am a facilitator, I must tell them what they will achieve.

LM: In what ways is this different to how you taught in the past?
SL: I now make learners aware of the aim of my lessons before I start. (Lesson Discussion Interview, Mashamba School, SL, Capacity, 14 October 1998)

MN: In the OBE, the teacher works as a facilitator and not as a dictator. It [being an OBE facilitator] helps the teacher to know each and every learner because they are working in groups. The teacher can easily get the mistakes, which are done, in groups. In OBE there is few [little] teacher talk because the teacher encourages the learners in their groups.

SN4: It [teaching] is different to the past as it unites teachers and learners together. It encourages the child to participate. In the previous education, the teacher just taught and the children memorised without understanding what they were doing...
IN: In OBE, this method helps arouse interest in learning. The teacher is a facilitator....

LM: Could we move on? No?

SN4: It [teaching] is different because in the past education, the teacher just talked and the learner memorised the subject matter. But now the learners participate fully by doing different tasks in their groups with the help of the teacher as facilitator. (Focus Group Interview Number 2, Mutshetshe School, 4 August 1998)

Teachers act as facilitators for small groups, or teams of pupils, with the emphasis on finding out information (Focus Group Interview Number 1, Nwaxinyamani School, TM2, 28 May 1998).

This shared understanding of the teacher as facilitator gave concrete expression to the idea of OBE being a learner-centred curriculum. The teachers viewed this type of teaching as a classroom with active learners who explored issues together in groups, while the teacher helped them acquire new knowledge through his or her role as curriculum facilitator. For example:

OBE is good; it is learner-centred rather than teacher-centred. The learners participate. Now we teach skills, in the past it was [only] content-based. (Focus Group Interview Number 2, Baropodi School, ZM, 13 May 1998)

It is a very good thing...OBE...the children are not afraid of us. If they see the teacher, they have a chance to discuss and ask questions. They participate in all things and that is why they are free. (Focus Group Interview Number 1, Khomisani School, BM, 3 August 1998)

I’ll try by all means to help them [other teachers] see the difference between the old situation and the new situation. Thereafter, I’ll help them on how to plan their curriculum, which is going to be productive and active at the end of the day. (Focus Group Interview Number 2, Khomisani School, GS, 3 August 1998)

Learner-centred, I can say, the learners in my classroom are involved in activities, they are not passive, there are activities to involve the learners (Pair Interview, Letjatji School, LS1, 26 October 1998).

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Teaching is learner-centred. That is, the learners are now engaged in learning activities. In the olden days, a teacher used to tell learners [facts]. Learners were just passive listeners. They were expected to memorise what the teacher is telling them. They were not allowed to share their [own] experiences. (Focus Group Interview Number 1, Mashamba School, AM, 27 May 1998)

MN: OBE is not a recipe. I think that OBE is good for teachers and learners. The learning content is child-centred and not teacher-centred....OBE is good for teachers because this method is not teacher-centred...

ET: OBE is a new curriculum that is child-centred, not memorisation. Educators must understand that every lesson in OBE is [for] the benefit of learners. In OBE, learners must be able to do things on their own. They must gain some skills. (Focus Group Interview Number 2, Mutshetshe School, 4 August 1998)

In OBE the learners are not passive recipients of knowledge, but active participants in the teaching and learning process. Active learning is typical of a learner-centred approach....Grouping of learners played an important role. (Focus Group Interview Number 2, Nwaxinyamani School, PB, 28 May 1998)

The role of the teacher as facilitator in a learner-centred classroom entrenched the norm of focusing on issues of pedagogy and began to develop particular conventions around teaching and learning in the six schools. The impact that this shared understanding of curriculum authority had on classroom practice in these schools is illustrated in detail in Chapter Six.

Once the teachers had established themselves as authoritative in terms of their ability to make pedagogical decisions and their ability to understand their role as facilitators in their classrooms, they did give some attention to the other discourse that had also emerged out of the struggle to transform curriculum understanding; namely the discourse of curriculum knowledge.
Teachers in the project schools experienced difficulties and confusions in aligning the content of their lessons to the pedagogical decisions they had already made. This unease was experienced similarly across all schools, thus illustrating the extent to which curriculum knowledge was backgrounded in relation to curriculum authority in the teachers’ understanding of OBE:

After choosing a skill you are expected to choose a suitable content from a textbook. Some of the chapters from textbooks are not easy to teach skills. (Focus Group Interview Number 1, Baropodi School, MB, 13 May 1998)

OBE is a challenge because it is difficult to put the theme with the skills (Focus Group Interview Number 2, Baropodi School, LM1, 13 May 1998).

We used to teach content, but now lessons are skills-based. We use real life situations. Sometimes it is hard to find a skill. (Focus Group Interview Number 1, Khomisani School, TB, 3 August 1998)

Content was more important [in the past curriculum]. The child who could reproduce much more content was regarded as the most intelligent learner. Since OBE was introduced to our school, things have changed. More emphasis is now on skills rather than on content. Skills are now used for the learner to explore content. (Focus Group Interview Number 1, Letjatji School, PL, 12 May 1998)

The teachers [in other schools] haven’t tried to practice it. They don’t realise that OBE is skills-based. To them it is still content-based, theoretical. OBE is to critically understand and react positively with the changes in the world. They don’t understand the focus point. (Focus Group Interview Number 1, Mashamba School, AM, 27 May 1998)

MN: OBE is good because it helps the learners learn different ways of doing things, skills. They do not just memorise content....

IN: Previously we taught content-based lessons. Now we teach OBE which is based on outcomes and skills. (Focus Group Interview Number 2, Mutshetshe School, 4 August 1998)
FM: It is a [challenge] to teach skills and not content in OBE - it is not difficult, but it is a challenge....

MM1: Learners [in the past] were given content and not told the motive behind that content, but OBE explains that. It also encourages productivity and not reproduction of what was taught. (Focus Group Interview Number 2, Nwaxinyamani School, 28 May 1998)

These quotes imply that the designers of OBE, who entrenched pedagogy at the expense of knowledge in the curriculum policy documents, and the project’s teacher development activities that also focused on pedagogy at the expense of knowledge were not mindful of Shulman’s (1986) caution about separating content and pedagogy in a sound knowledge base for teachers. This separation gave the teachers very little guidance or support that could have helped them to meaningfully integrate issues of knowledge into the already existing pedagogical frame of their lessons. Teachers in the participatory communities were left with little option but to turn to what they already knew about content; thus they made connections between OBE and what they thought was relevant to everyday life. In a variety of ways teachers in all six schools connected OBE with issues that they felt were relevant to these everyday lives. One quote which best reflects these connections is included from each school:

One thing I like about outcomes-based education is that it tries to make schooling relevant (Focus Group Interview Number 1, Baropodi School, SM2, 13 May 1998).

Outcomes-based education is a flexible curriculum; it is not a hard and fast rule to teach something that is irrelevant within your community. Unlike long ago when you were bound to teach, maybe for example, a dinosaur, teaching has become an open, shared process. (Focus Group Interview Number 2, Khomisani School, EB1, 3 August 1998)

Isn’t it that when it’s new, then it has to be relevant...If the curriculum is new it has to be relevant to the children. (Focus Group Interview Number 1, Letjatjji School, PM1, 12 May 1998)
OBE gears learners to satisfy further challenges of this world. This work can be very relevant. Relevant to the world as it changes....The curriculum should be relevant to the world situation. That is, it must prepare the learners to be able to answer world problems. We no longer prescribe what learners should do. (Focus Group Interview Number 1, Mashamba School, AM, 27 May 1998)

I get a chance to think of something relevant to teach my pupils. I can use their environment; I get a chance to create something for my pupils. (Focus Group Interview Number 1, Mutshetshe School, MR, 4 August 1998)

We only copy those pieces of the curriculum that are relevant to Nwaxinyamani. In other schools, it might be difficult. We went to SHC and copied all that was relevant....All what SHC is doing is relevant to all schools. (Focus Group Interview Number 1, Nwaxinyamani School, AN1, 28 May 1998)

The teachers enacted the shift they made in confining curriculum knowledge to everyday, relevant experiences through their role as connectors.

The role of the teacher as connector

In the role of the teacher as connector, the teachers tried to make connections between the lived experiences of their learners and the content of their lessons. This was not unlike what Lingard et al (2001b) suggests is a component of productive pedagogies, namely the extent to which teachers explicitly invoke and use the learners’ background knowledge. Newmann and Associates’ (1996), in cautioning that non-authentic pedagogy is one where there is little or no connectedness between teaching and the world beyond the classroom, also seems to resonate somewhat with the project teachers’ understanding of relevance. But the particular manner in which the group of project teachers attached meaning to relevance and the manner in which they separated this from pedagogical issues, were very different to what Newmann and Lingard would associate with intellectual quality in classroom practice. The following
quotes show that the teachers’ emphasis on relating relevance to what the children in their classrooms would physically see caused them to omit issues from the curriculum that did not fit this framework. For example:

This OBE is designed in such a way that it fits the context in which the child lives. This OBE can be different in different provinces. In Soweto [Gauteng], you can look at mining. In Durban [KwaZulu Natal], at sugar. (Focus Group Number Interview 1, Baropodi School, VL, 13 May 1998)

LM1: The children in Soweto are more confident and advanced. They are used to new things - they go to town.
ZM: But we can use traditional things, like calabash, beads, and skins of animals. I can ask my children to bring them. (Focus Group Interview Number 2, Baropodi School, 13 May 1998)

We have to teach the pupils according to their place. What they see, their environment. Have to teach according to their environment….For example, at Letjatji the environment here is rural. There are animals, people plough and there are many trees in the veld. And the soil here is sandy. The child has to know these, not neglecting what is not available here like newspapers, many cars, trains, and towns. I think the environment of the child plays an important role in the education of the child….We still need a guideline on how to use our environment which is rural. We need to teach according to our environment….There are some things you can't teach from Letjatji….What we have to do is teach to where we are. (Focus Group Interview Number 1, Letjatji School, PM1, 12 May 1998)

I think the environment is very much important, more especially for the life of the learners, because it is what they know. What they know and what they observe daily. So teaching them about what they know is very important, like transport, before switching to something they do not know. (Video Discussion Interview, Letjatji School, PM2, Transport, 26 October 1999)

Up to a certain level, say from Foundation Phase to Intermediate Phase, you only teach the skill according to what they see and hear. Skills related to their place of living. They [learners] enjoy learning from what they know. They enjoy doing things that are around them, which they can find, which they can get. So maybe if we are teaching them history, we could call an old man or woman to come and they could interview him or her, they could tell us about the past. (Pair Interview, Letjatji School, JM1, 26 October 1998)
According to OBE, we teach what is known, what is around. Like in the past we would teach about Shaka [leader of the Zulu nation in the nineteenth century], they don’t know him, they can’t see him. What we teach in OBE is living….OBE is a living thing that helps us learn what is around us. (Lesson Discussion, Mashamba School, NM, Community Needs, 15 October 1998)

The role of the teacher as connector led teachers to believe that they should only teach about things that their learners would actually see and experience in their everyday lives in what was arguably a very constrained model of curriculum. The everyday became privileged in the teachers’ discourse with the more abstract school knowledge being at best backgrounded, and at worst, ignored. This was surely not what Bernstein (1971) meant in his message system of curriculum. It must also be acknowledged that Bernstein’s message system of evaluation was silent in the teachers’ curriculum discourse at that time, as they had not yet included assessment into their understanding of the elements that constituted OBE. The extent to which the discursive practice of curriculum knowledge impacted on the teachers’ actual practices in their classrooms is considered in Chapter Six.

Teachers were aware that the process of implementing this new OBE curriculum in their classrooms was a difficult one, and one that depended on a certain level of support for it to have any chance of success in their schools. The next section documents the struggle the teachers went through to transform curriculum support in their school and the particular way that this struggle manifested itself in two of the schools.

**TRANSFORMING CURRICULUM SUPPORT**

The struggle to transform curriculum support only took place after the shared understanding of OBE had been established in the six schools. This particular
struggle emerged out of the support the project had provided to all of the schools. This support was spoken of in the following ways:

ZM: We only heard [about OBE] from SHC....
LM1: The Sacred Heart people through their workshops helped me to gain a lot and this made me change my attitude....
PS: We are a Presidential school and have support from SHC. (Focus Group Interview Number 2, Baropodi School, 13 May 1998)

Our contact with SHC helps....I heard about OBE from SHC. They broadened our knowledge and encouraged us. (Focus Group Interview Number 1, Khomisani School, SN2, 3 August 1998)

The curriculum is very good. More especially after SHC helps us with some information. We are one of the first schools to start....I want to be more empowered. We are learning a lot....They [the project] gave us, Sydwell and Lorraine, examples of what had happened at SHC. We liked their approach. We didn't used to let other teachers observe. But now we are relaxed. (Focus Group Interview Number 1, Letjatji School, PM1, 12 May 1998)

AM: Polite and social is what the people from the project did to us and we were then and even now, ready and prepared to adapt to changes....

TM1: We have no departmental support. We have only Sacred Heart workshops. (Focus Group Interview Number 1, Mashamba School, 27 May 1998)

SN4: I like the support from SHC. When I saw the learners at SHC, it motivated me to teach harder so that my learners can be like them. I'm doing it for my learners....

MN: You were the one who convinced us to try the new curriculum. (Focus Group Interview Number 2, Mutshetshe School, 4 August 1998)

FM: We heard about OBE from SHC....

MM1: To get OBE to work, I'll organise in-school workshops [at other schools]. Other teachers could come to my school. They should visit us. Other teachers could help with materials and lesson plans. Basically what SHC are doing with us! (Focus Group Interview Number 2, Nwaxinyamani School, 28 May 1998)

Four of the six schools remained dependent on the support and guidance provided by the project, while the other two schools experienced a struggle that culminated in the emergence of two school-based teacher leaders. In Letjatji,
the teacher WK took the initiative and gave his participatory community a school-based organisational process to follow that was aimed at enhancing the implementation of OBE. His actions were supported by the other members of Letjatji’s participatory community who had ‘elected’ him as their leader, thus creating legitimacy for his actions. Devaney (1987) usefully noted that legitimacy like that experienced by WK is a crucial component for effective teacher leadership. Teachers in Letjatji’s participatory community spoke of his emergence:

We failed to implement at this stage [after only one group of teachers had completed the in-service programme at SHC]. Even after Sydwell started to come [to support Letjatji teachers] we did not proceed. It was only after Willy went to SHC [for the in-service programme] did we start by coming together….Sometimes I tried [to start the process] and the [other] teachers would say, “No!” But this needs great courage. With Willy, he had the courage. It [implementing OBE] would just have collapsed….Firstly, Willy approached the management [of the school] then he approached me, then we called a staff meeting. He showed me after reading your material how you at Sacred Heart started. (Focus Group Interview Number 1, Letjatji School, PM1, 12 May 1998)

People [teachers in Letjatji’s participatory community] had been sorry they were not ready to start at first, we don’t need pushing now. You know, for the first time, we started with the Intermediate Phase. We waited for the Senior and Foundation Phase to prepare OBE. Sydwell [the project’s curriculum trainer] prepared some of the lessons, and we came together, where he wanted to find out the difference between content-based and outcomes-based lessons. We tried to move ourselves accordingly. Then there should be one who could co-ordinate. We all elected Willy. (Focus Group Interview Number 2, Letjatji School, JM1, 12 May 1998)

A similar event took place in Mashamba where SM3 emerged out of the participatory community as a teacher leader. Different teachers spoke of her as a leader:

EM3: We sat down and elected Selina to lead us. She helped us work together….

SL: OBE is demanding because it needs a person who is dedicated. A person who can give herself time to prepare lessons thoroughly. To avoid laziness, teachers have to work as a team. There should
be the co-ordinator amongst them, to monitor educators’ work. He [she] should also make presentations to other educators. (Focus Group Interview Number 2, Mashamba School, 27 May 1998)

You see, a driving force is the person who is tolerant and understanding, who has the ability to unite us, to make sure we can change. Change creates feelings of fear and uncertainty, fear of the unknown. We needed a person to help us with these difficulties. To help us be positive and try to change. Encourage and motivate people to join hands. It was Selina who helped us to do this. (Pair Interview, Mashamba School, AM, 23 Nov 1998)

Before discussing the role of teacher as leader in detail a few biographical comments need to be made about WK and SM3 in order to better understand their actions and their achievements. This personal history brings to the fore the broad range of skills, abilities and experiences that Lieberman et al (1988) argue are linked to the teacher as leader. WK left school at the end of Grade 10 and completed a two-year teaching diploma at Rehlelwe College in Limpopo. After completing this qualification, WK returned to school as a student to complete his Grade 12 school-leavers’ examination. This type of educational history was quite common in Limpopo with its particular homeland-based form of apartheid education. By the time the project began, WK had fifteen years of teaching experience, most of which had taken place at Letjatji. In an interview, he explained the manner in which he began to teach at Letjatji, graphically demonstrating the erratic manner in which the ex-homeland Department of Education functioned:

WK: I was sent [by the Department of Education] to Mafsiakgomo Secondary School.

LM: Did you teach Geography and English there?

WK: I was to do that. But unfortunately…I did not know where the school was. The Inspector gave me a letter [of introduction and appointment] for the principal. But I came here to Letjatji [by mistake]. I gave the letter to the principal.

LM: So you were supposed to go to this secondary school, but you came here to Letjatji instead?

WK: Yes, I didn’t know where the [secondary] school was...the area...I went to the [Letjatji] principal’s office, gave him the letter and he said, “OK”. After reading the letter he said “No, you are welcome, don’t go!”
LM: So he kept you?
WK: Yes [laughter]. (Leadership Interview, Letjatji School, 31 August 1998)

WK’s official post level was that of teacher and he had never applied for a promotion post to Head of Department (HOD), the next step in the bureaucratic process. His interest seemed to lie more with union issues as had been the chairperson for what was then the Northern Transvaal Teachers’ Union. He also expressed a deep interest in curriculum issues:

LM: Your future career aspirations?
WK: Move on to the department and deal with curriculum issues, helping other teachers.
LM: Would you like to move out of the classroom?
WK: Exactly, the circuit office [departmental structure closest to schools] where I can deal with curriculum. I want to help teachers and not sit in an office. Making sure to help teachers, make sure there is quality. Wanted this long before the project came here. (Leadership Interview, Letjatji School, 31 August 1998)

The emergence of SM3 in Mashamba’s participatory community was slightly different as she already held the formal management title of HOD before the project began. SM3 had taught at Mashamba School for twenty years and her official title was Head of Foundation Phase. However, her management responsibility was predominantly administrative as it included meeting parents who wished to enrol their children in Grade 1, developing the Foundation Phase timetable for each grade, and assisting teachers with discipline issues. This role of HOD was similar to the headship and management roles that Christie (2001) uses to define the more administrative responsibilities of formal school leadership. However, SM3’s new role as teacher leader was different in that it had a direct focus on curriculum, an area of the school that was not previously included in a manager’s responsibilities. It was precisely the ‘newness’ of this responsibility that led to there being no conflict for SM3 between her two roles in Mashamba. She expressed her opinion about her two roles thus:
SM3: In this project, after some discussion the teachers elected me to become their leader….Before the project I only worked with the Foundation Phase, now I work with Intermediate and Senior Phases too….If I had not done it, we would not be where we are today. After coming from Sacred Heart, when I was not in the school, Elias said, “We can’t do it, not when you are not here!” Even the principal said I must be the one to lead this process….You need to be elected by the whole staff, it is very important. Some other teachers might know your weaknesses better than the principal, he can’t decide on his own. The elected person is the one to be trusted, you can trust them, you can ask them for help, this person will be ready to help. There is a good relationship.

LM: I know that you co-ordinate the work of different teams of teachers here at your school, but where does your authority to organise their work come from?

SM3: They have all elected me so they listen to me. It makes no difference that I’m a Head of Department, rather it’s the way I organise the curriculum. The principal nominated me and they all accepted me. (Leadership Interview, Mashamba School, 13 October 1998)

This unofficial leadership role with its focus on curriculum became more important to SM3 in the project than the official management role with its focus on administration that she had received from the Department of Education.

The role of the teacher as leader

A general focus on curriculum and a specific focus on helping other teachers with OBE were central to this role of the teacher as leader. In particular, it was the curriculum focus that led the project to assume that there would be a direct link between the actions of the teacher leaders and improvements in classroom practice in Letjatji and Mashamba. The possibility was assumed that if the four schools without teacher leaders were not yet in a position to make successful improvements in practice, then at least these improvements would be seen in Letjatji and Mashamba. This assumption is revealed in field notes taken during research visits to Letjatji and Mashamba, as well as during interview discussions held at different times:
I am finding it difficult to track the lessons at Letjatji. I think it is because the concept of a lesson has changed considerably since the beginning of the project….I would have liked to stay with one teacher for the whole day, but Willy keeps making me leave the classrooms at a certain time. Obviously I am seeing showpiece lessons and am to be very pleasantly discouraged from staying any longer! Do I need to adjust my observation …yet again? In each lesson I observe, different and additional categories emerge. It was much easier at the beginning! But maybe this demonstrates changing and developing practice. (Field notes, Letjatji School, 1 September 1998)

Selina always greets me with a cup of tea and a sandwich when I arrive at Mashamba for lesson observations. I feel very welcome here, not just by Selina, but also by the teachers who all know I am coming and are clearly very well prepared for my visit! I guess I have to thank Selina for this as she takes me from class to class and makes sure that all the lessons on her list are observed by me. But unlike Willy at Letjatji, she does not stay with me during all of the lessons, nor does she join in on the interviews afterwards. (Field notes, Mashamba School, 14 October 1998)

Compared to the past, it [Letjatji] is a much better school. We can get people to discuss their work together and help each other. We can now openly talk about our work as teachers, we are so much freer and so are our learners. (Leadership Interview, Letjatji School, WK, 31 August 1998)

EM4: The school itself has a good name. Outsiders talk about it. They ask, “How is the new curriculum? How are you going about it?”...
LM: What changes has OBE brought to Mashamba?
SM3: More confidence among the school community. Many parents are interested in our school. Improved the School Management Team [principal and heads of department] and educators’ relationships. Played major role in uniting the school community. It made the community to own and respect the school’s resources. For example, there is no more vandalism at our local schools. It challenges some of our local high schools in such a way that they are in need of knowing how can they work with learners from Mashamba School. (Focus Group Interview Number 2, Mashamba School, 27 May 1998)

The assumption that the actions of the two teacher leaders would enhance the possibilities of improving teaching practice in Letjatji and Mashamba is further interrogated in Chapter Six.
The teacher leaders performed their actions within the socially supportive climate that was by then common to all participatory communities in the project. The following excerpt from an interview with WK details the type of supportive climate he tried to maintain in the participatory community at Letjatji:

**LM:** The principal and the teachers trust you?
**WK:** Exactly.

**LM:** How do the teachers that you work with treat you?
**WK:** They treat me well. The mandate to do the work comes from them. I have solved problems for them and they are confident in me.

**LM:** And what about the rest of the staff?
**WK:** The support comes from…they elected me. All of them, the whole school elected me. Even though we [in the project] were only working in Intermediate Phase, they [all teachers in Letjatji] had a say.

**LM:** Do you reward teachers? You know, congratulate them?
**WK:** We tell them they did well. The teachers are committed; we have a certificate to give them to show they are committed. It would recognise that we worked together for the year. We would have more power to succeed. This would motivate other teachers…Well all I really wanted was for all of us to continue [after the in-service programme at SHC]. I did not know that I would get a mandate and run the process! But I accepted it. I wanted us to move on, I did not expect they would make me the leader! But they gave me their support. (Leadership Interview, Letjatji School, 31 August 1998)

And SM3 also commented on the kinds of supportive relationships that she maintained in Mashamba's participatory community:

**SM3:** I respect the teachers and can learn from them and from the learners. I don't take myself as someone who knows everything, we all learn from each other.

**LM:** How have you managed to maintain this level of interest over the two years?
**SM3:** It is difficult, but we have co-operation between staff members to help us. The support of the principal also helps. I also have some encouragement from my co-workers, they all encourage me to continue. Everybody works together. (Leadership Interview, Mashamba School, 13 October 1998).
Both quotes stress the importance of the social climate in Letjatji and Mashamba’s participatory communities. But this socially supportive climate was further enhanced by WK and SM3’s actions that resolved interpersonal conflicts involving members of the participatory communities. Both WK and SM3 had experience in dealing with disagreements while still fostering an enabling environment in the participatory communities. Champy (1995) would consider this healthy as, “a culture that squashes disagreement is a culture doomed to stagnate” (p. 82).

After we set up our working groups [participatory communities] one of the teachers had a problem with the principal watching his lessons. He did not want to be observed by Jerry [principal of Letjatji], he felt that the principal would not understand what he saw…not follow our [OBE] principles. And there was a conflict with the principal. So we had a meeting [of teachers in the participatory community] and the other teachers said, “Willy, you are in charge - you must solve that.” I went to talk to the teacher concerned and asked, “What is your problem?” I told him that whatever we discuss here is private, my aim is to help this move forward. Then I took his input and talked to the principal. I asked him [the principal] “Please, for now can you stay away?” And he agreed to the way forward. Then I went back to the teacher and said we have solved it this way. I don’t leave it that people fall into conflict but I try to negotiate with the individuals. Then we come together. After our agreement we talk and correct it. (Leadership Interview, Letjatji School, WK, 31 August 1998)

SM3: I sit with the educators who have a problem and show them what I think about our problem. I try to make the negative thing become a positive thing. But generally the teachers co-operate with me, it’s not just that I’m a Head of Department, I live with them [the teachers in the participatory community] and don’t undermine them....

LM: Have you been tested here yourself?
SM3: Oh yes, by some of them especially in the beginning [laughs]. Some would not come to the meetings, I was not discouraged, I continued to work with the few [that did attend meetings]. Slowly they all started to come and now I work with them all. But it is better not to force them, don’t undo the work, wait, you see, I know them well! It is a challenge to work with teachers, not all of them are motivated or interested. I ignore jealousies and just continue, and then it works. If they are left behind, I wait. When they see the results of others, they come, they also like the good things!
Like in my class if they see my learners are doing well, there is a bit of competition! I also speak straight to the people and ask them what is wrong. (Leadership Interview, Mashamba School, 13 October 1998)

The participatory communities in Letjatji and Mashamba, like the others, had developed a shared understanding of curriculum that was constituted around shifts in curriculum authority and shifts in curriculum knowledge. But unlike the other participatory communities where curriculum difficulties were left for the project’s attention, the teacher leaders at Letjatji and Mashamba tried to resolve the problems experienced by teachers in their schools. In the quote below, WK explained his view on the importance of understanding OBE and on the demands that this understanding placed on teachers. He also commented on the strategies he used to overcome what he perceived to be the lack of understanding on the part of his peers in Letjatji’s participatory community:

Some teachers maybe fear OBE because they do not understand it. They never had a thorough workshop on OBE, that is why some [teachers] fear it. You need to give an explanation of OBE in a workshop - this has empowered us [teachers in the participatory community]. We choose our own content. Now we have enough time to plan our work, to apply and work and come together. We discuss together which methods are best. There are a variety of teaching methods, and you decide. Come together and choose. We select our own content....This time [in the participatory community] we have enough time to plan our work, plan our skills, plan different methods in class. I think in that case, it is better [than the previous curriculum] we have no pressure, except come together, apply them, come together. If we find something wrong, we correct it ourselves and we manage our own teaching....Teachers try and develop their own lessons. They come together as a group of professionals and design resources themselves, they even design new methods and implement them themselves in lessons. Because after you plan, there is observation. We say, “OK”. They [teachers in the participatory community] develop new methods together from what they saw in the teacher training. (Focus Group Interview Number 2, Letjatji School, WK, 12 May 1998)

LM: Do they [other teachers in the participatory community] think you have all the answers, or that you are still learning?

WK: They know that I am learning, but at the same time they trust that I can help. I don’t put the solution, we discuss first and ultimately come together....
LM: How do you feel about it [your role as teacher leader]?

WK: I enjoy it and like being involved. I am able to use my initiative. I am a better teacher, as are all my colleagues. We are all at the same level, whether you are a teacher, head of department, principal, we are all colleagues. We help each other and do things now that we understand. Support from teachers and principal is very important. Because whatever we want to introduce, we discuss and he [the principal] says, “Proceed!” (Leadership Interview, Letjatji School, 31 August 1998)

WK was able to resolve curriculum difficulties that were experienced by teachers in the participatory community as they grappled with OBE in their classrooms. A member of Letjatji’s participatory community mentioned the difficulties teachers had concerning multiple interpretations of OBE and on how the actions of the teacher leader helped to resolve these difficulties:

What I’m aware of is that OBE can be different. We all understand OBE differently. The way the department understands it is different. They have started in Grade 1. The department promotes children [to the next grade] who can do certain things [in the classroom] but they [departmental officials] can’t tell you [what these things are], not even the inspectors know. We tell them what to do….Usually we [teachers in the participatory community] come together, sometimes we interpret it [OBE] differently in our groups. So we make mini-workshops where we have to explain and discuss with each other, like Peter [another member of Letjatji’s participatory community] has helped me with assessment. We come together and help, you can’t just go and teach. (Focus Group Interview Number 1, Letjatji School, PM1, 12 May 1998)

And, teacher TM1 from Mashamba’s participatory community commented on strategies they used with SM3 to resolve curriculum problems:

We firstly make some relevant facts concerning the issue or question. Wherein we are going to deduct the most relevant ideas from those facts, of which we are going to agree, in groups, that we think these are the things that can help, as such we shall be taking decisions in groups. (Focus Group Interview Number 1, Mashamba School, TM1, 27 May 1998)
SM3 commented on the activities she organised for teachers in the participatory community to keep her focus on teaching and learning and to help her colleagues with OBE:

When planning lessons, I make suggestions and we meet to discuss them. Then we prepare some lessons together. I come with ideas in advance, then we caucus and they [teachers in the participatory community] also give me their suggestions. It is difficult for me to watch in their classrooms because I also have a class, but I manage once or twice. I make a record of the lesson preparation and what the teachers do in Foundation, Intermediate and Senior Phases. So I keep copies of the lessons. Yes, I help teachers with any curriculum problems they have. If I don’t know, then I caucus for help [with other teachers] and then we have a solution together. (Leadership Interview, Mashamba School, SM3, 13 October 1998)

SM3: We [the teacher leader and her colleagues in the participatory community] workshop together and come and brainstorm themes. I record it, all them and show them. They are comfortable because we do it all together, we all own it. I accept their criticisms.

LM: What other support do you have?
SM3: Support from the principal, if I tell him I’m tired or upset, he helps me. (Pair Interview, Mashamba School, 23 November 1998)

The actions of WK and SM3 established the norms and conventions that governed what teacher leaders could do in schools with a focus on curriculum understanding and curriculum development. The main characteristic of those conventions was the leaders’ abilities to satisfactorily resolve curriculum difficulties that teachers in the participatory communities experienced. The actions of WK and SM3 were located in the image of a strong peer group of teachers who provided interpersonal support to each other to such an extent that key individuals emerged who were able to perform certain additional curriculum actions. The fact that these curriculum actions were carried out by one person in Letjatji and one person in Mashamba is the cause of ambiguity in this thesis, which on the one hand rebels against the idea of individual saviours, while on the other hand documents the actions of individuals to present a composite picture of the possible actions of teacher leaders in general.
CONCLUSION

Using Fairclough’s (1991) stage of interpretation, this chapter revealed that the struggles the teachers went through to transform their practice from isolation to collaboration were intertwined, and that the resolution of one struggle ultimately led to the emergence of another. It also revealed the roles that teachers assumed as they participated in social interactions in their participatory communities, and provided some insights into the discourses that were foregrounded or backgrounded as a result of these interactions. The complex process of transformation began with the teachers establishing the norms and conventions that would govern the situational context wherein their new collaborative interactions occurred. Traditional barriers were broken down between teachers and they began to interact with each other in a socially supportive and nurturing environment. This struggle led to some of the teachers emerging more powerfully than others as a result of their support of collaboration; it also led to the more powerful teachers producing the discourse of teacher collaboration that the other more resistant teachers were left to interpret. The contrasting and often contradictory MR that the different teachers brought to this struggle established collaboration as a privileged discourse and practice in the six schools.

Another struggle emerged once collaboration had been entrenched as a social practice in the six schools. This struggle, which involved the participatory communities in the development of a shared understanding of OBE, shifted teacher collaboration from mere collegiality to collaboration focused on teacher learning. Teachers drew on each other’s MR as they grappled together with issues of authority and knowledge in their participatory communities. To begin with teachers learned to be authoritative in terms of creating the curriculum; and they did this though making pedagogical decisions and through discussing how they would facilitate learning in their lessons. The discursive practices related to curriculum authority seemed to suggest that the MR the teachers drew on for
this would help them implement this new learning in practice, and that this could have a positive impact on teaching in the six schools. It was at this point in the chapter that concerns began to emerge concerning what the teachers were actually learning about curriculum knowledge in their participatory communities. The MR that they brought to the processes of producing and interpreting a shared understanding of curriculum knowledge raised questions about the extent to which this would translate into lessons of intellectual quality. For example, the separation of pedagogy and knowledge in their discourse was problematic as it seemed to suggest that content could be merely ‘added on’ to the pedagogical frame of lessons, and the manner in which the teachers’ equated curriculum knowledge with everyday knowledge seemed to imply that children would only learn about the ‘known’ and that the ‘unknown’ would be deliberately omitted from the curriculum. This chapter raised questions about the impact the new discursive practices of curriculum authority and curriculum knowledge could have had on teaching and learning in the President’s Schools; it is only in the next chapter that these questions are addressed.

The final struggle documented in this chapter related to the manner in which curriculum developments introduced by the project were supported in each school. While all six schools acknowledged the role the project and its field workers played in supporting teacher learning, two schools enhanced this support through the actions of two teachers who emerged as school-based leaders. While these two leaders had slightly different pathways to leadership, their actions were very similar and entrenched the curriculum focus already evident in Letjatji and Mashamba. In other words, the teacher leaders built on the learning that had already taken place in their participatory communities and enhanced it through resolving interpersonal conflict and though solving curriculum challenges teachers faced in their classrooms with OBE. The assumption was made that school-based teacher leadership would enhance the possibilities of improvements in teaching practice at Letjatji and Mashamba.
In conclusion, arguments were made to show that in the context of the President’s Schools, teacher collaboration was viewed by the project as a deceptively simple and straightforward development strategy. It was thought that this strategy would assist teachers to acquire new knowledge about OBE and that this knowledge would impact positively on their practice. The next chapter continues these arguments and tries to ascertain the extent to which teacher collaboration in the project sustained or transformed past teaching practices.