CHAPTER 6

KNOWLEDGE AS PRACTICE:
ENACTING IMAGES OF TEACHING AND LEARNING

Why this sharp distinction between content and pedagogical processes? Has it always been asserted that one either knows content and pedagogy is secondary and unimportant, or that one knows pedagogy and is not held accountable for content?...Mere content knowledge is likely to be as useless pedagogically as content-free skill. (Shulman, 1986, p.6 & 8)

The teachers in the President’s Schools created a precondition for action in their classrooms through establishing new discursive practices in relation to teacher collaboration as a social practice. This chapter analyses the particular form that action took through probing the kinds of lessons that the teachers taught during the project. These lessons are considered to be the products or the artifacts of how the teachers interpreted and then produced the new social practice of teacher collaboration. The concept of images of teaching and learning, borrowed from Elbaz (1981; 1983) and Clandinin (1986), is used to capture both the emerging nature of the practice that arose out of teacher collaboration and the complexities of teaching and learning in South African rural schools.

The analysis provided in this chapter\(^1\) shows that together the teachers did forge a new teaching practice, and that the form this practice took was influenced by a complex array of factors; some of which pre-dated the project, while others were introduced to the schools by the project. For example: the legacy of the teachers’ past teaching experiences impacted on the shared understanding that they developed about outcomes-based education (OBE); the context of teaching and learning in these traditional rural schools resulted in there being very few resources for the teachers to draw on while they planned and prepared their OBE lessons; the nature of OBE itself, with its focus on pedagogy impacted on

\(^{1}\) An earlier draft of this chapter was presented at a conference for PhD students held at the University of Queensland, Australia.
the teachers’ emerging practice; and the teacher development activities of in-service and school-based support programmes also influenced what happened in the classrooms. My initial reaction to the lessons that emerged out of this intricate set of factors was that they were extremely simplistic, and it was only after a deeper analysis that I was able to understand and acknowledge their complex multifaceted nature. The concept, ‘teachers’ knowledge as practice’, is used in this chapter to both identify this practice and to illustrate the comprehensive set of elements that characterised teaching and learning in the President’s Schools.

This chapter is organised around the curriculum roles discussed in the previous chapter, namely the teacher as decision-maker, the teacher as facilitator, the teacher as connector, and the teacher as leader. These roles are used to tease out the various elements that constituted the teachers’ knowledge as practice. Fairclough’s (1991) analytical stage of description is used to consider the impact these curriculum roles had on either reproducing or transforming past teaching practices. A range of lesson observation data such as lesson extracts, learning activities and field notes taken from the analytical categories of questions and answers and group learning activities are used throughout this chapter to illustrate the arguments developed.

THE DECISION-MAKER IN PRACTICE

This section begins the analysis of the teaching practice that emerged out of the President’s Schools Project. It does this through looking at the lessons developed while the teachers fulfilled the requirements of their role as curriculum decision-makers. This role is one of the practices that gave expression to the discourse of curriculum authority discussed in Chapter Five. The previous chapter showed that the teachers focused their decision-making roles on issues of pedagogy with a specific reference to teaching techniques, as pedagogy had become a privileged discourse in the six schools. It also indicated that the
teachers were more interested in the process of making decisions than they were in the outcomes of those decision-making processes. This section continues these arguments and looks carefully at the kinds of lessons that emerged from the decisions the teachers made.

The two lesson categories that typified the teachers’ pattern of practice, namely questions and answers, and group learning activities, are used to structure this section, which begins to reveal the teachers’ knowledge as practice.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS:
Establishing pedagogical control

One of the first curriculum decisions that the teachers made together in their participatory communities related to the manner in which they planned to introduce their lessons to the learners. This section illustrates that the teachers implemented a particular question and answer technique that not only served to introduce lessons to their learners but also established and maintained the teachers’ pedagogical control over the flow of lessons. Below are quotes from Letjatji, Mashamba and Nwaxinyamani Schools that reflect the kinds of questioning techniques the teachers believed would best introduce their lessons. Central to these representative quotes are the decisions teachers made about the manner in which they would ask questions, which, when answered, would lead their learners to develop deeper understandings of the lessons being taught. Many experienced teachers give a great deal of thought to how they should phrase questions and then process the answers given. This practice was also evident in some of the project teachers, who expressed it thus:

JM1: I introduced my lesson [on communication] briefly through questions like “What would you do if you wanted to get a message to your parents in Johannesburg?” That is how I introduced my lesson, through questions to the children. “What did your parents use [to communicate] when they were children?” They wrote a
letter, folded it into an envelope, stick it. Then [they took it] to the Post Office with the letter in a bag so it would not get dirty....

LS1: I had an introduction [for my lesson on tenses]. I chose a learner and got her to do an action. I wrote a sentence on the board of what she did, then asked them [the rest of the class] to say what is happening here. I asked, “Do you agree?” I asked questions and told them this sentence is positive, let’s make it negative....

JM1: The teacher asks questions to make sure that they [learners] have been listening. (Pair Interview, Letjatji School, 26 October 1998)

A teacher does not have to stand before learners and deliver facts, as was before [in the old curriculum]. One has [the] chance of letting learners bring their [own] ideas [into the lessons].” Learners also have choice; for example, if a learner does not understand, then he or she is allowed to make his or her own view by questions, and these questions allow educators to try and look for a better approach to make all learners understand. In making choices, one has to look at what one thinks is best for learners, not just encourage rote learning, that is [not just] letting learners memorise facts that do not have use. (Focus Group Interview Number 2, Mashamba School, EM4, 27 May 1998)

The children have changed [in the new curriculum practice]. Now they work together and are answering questions. Children just sat quietly in the past. They never answered questions....I mean the learners are no more shy. They ask some questions on their own. They need to be clarified where they don’t understand. (Focus Group Interview Number 2, Nwaxinyamani School, PB, 28 May 1998)

While these three quotes show that many teachers in the project did think deeply about the role that questions played in their lessons, they also seem to suggest variations in the knowledge as practice that the teachers drew on as they made decisions about their question and answer techniques. On the one hand, as the first quote seems to suggest, teachers considered that they were responsible for asking questions that would lead their learners towards a particular set of answers. In addition, the questions asked would lead learners to understand the physical or mechanical aspects of lesson topics, in this case communication and sentence structure, rather than to understand the more cognitive aspects of these topics. This type of question and answer practice resonates with techniques associated with fundamental pedagogics that Taylor and Vinjevold (1999) described as including rote learning where the teacher asks questions about a series of propositions in such a way that analytical and critical thinking

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are constrained. On the other hand, the second and third quotes do seem to suggest a more transformational outcomes-based practice where the learners also asked questions in an attempt to construct their own knowledge. This perception is contradicted in Section 5.2, Learners’ Roles, in the lesson observation schedule (see Appendix H) where it was documented that in only three of the forty-five lessons observed was there any evidence of learner-posed questions.

The contradictions embedded in the above quotes are clarified through using Fairclough’s (1991) model of critical discourse analysis, which shows that irrespective of who asked questions, the teachers used them to establish and maintain their pedagogical control over the flow of lessons. For example, in the first quote, teacher JM1 used questions and answers to find out if her learners had “been listening”. Her use of the phrase, “make sure”, is another textual feature that reinforced her position of control. Also, teacher LS1 used the phrase “chose a learner and got her to do an action”, thus reinforcing her authoritative position as the teacher in control of how lessons flowed in her classroom. In the second quote, the teacher asked questions to help him regulate his own practice in case he had to, “try and look for a better approach to make all learners understand”. Once again phrases like “letting learners” and “is allowed to make” serve to reinforce the teacher’s control that manifested itself during the question and answer lesson introduction. Lastly, a sentence in the third quote, “They [learners] need to be clarified where they don’t understand”, also serves a controlling function. This analysis suggests that a dominant feature in the teachers’ knowledge as practice at this point was their authoritative position in the classroom, irrespective of what kind of questioning techniques were used.

There is nothing new, nor indeed necessarily counter-productive, with teachers being positioned authoritatively in lessons in terms of directing the flow of lessons. Even learner-centred practices stress the importance of the teachers’ role in helping children negotiate a pathway to socially acceptable knowledge (Brophy and Alleman, 1991). Official curriculum OBE documents also
emphasise the importance of the teachers’ role in supporting children to “acquire the targeted knowledge, skills and values” (Department of Education, undated b, p. 38). But it was more the manner in which this emphasis on teacher authority was played out in the lessons observed that was problematic. Several lesson examples are included to demonstrate the teachers’ authority in practice and the manner in which it served a controlling function.

The first extract is taken from the fifteen-minute long introduction to teacher SL’s Natural Science lesson named the *Circulation of Air*. It is included as it illustrates the kind of questioning techniques that many teachers used to establish their authority while assuming the role of curriculum decision-makers. Note how the teacher answered some of her own questions, how her learners often chorused what she said in response to her signal, “all of you”, and how she used repetition as a mechanism of control, giving a sense of the rhythm and recitation characteristic of rote learning. At no time did any of the learners ask their own questions.

**Teacher:** Then what we are going to do today, we are going to observe, observe. Observe the circulation of the air. We are going to observe the circulation of the air. This is how we write the word ‘circulation’.

[SL writes the word ‘circulation’ on the board.]

What does the word ‘circulation’ mean in English? To go round something, to go round something. If I do something like this...

[SL walks around the front group of tables.]

I go round the table. The word ‘circulation’ means to go round something.

[SL writes this phrase ‘go round something’ on the board.]

Another word we are going to come across is ‘rising’.

[SL writes the word ‘rising’ on board.]

All of you?

**Learners:** Rising

**Teacher:** The word ‘rise’ ‘rising’ means to go up.

[SL writes the phrase ‘to go up’ on the board.]

If I ask you, what is another word for the word ‘rising’? It means, you will say, it means to go upwards, to go upward.
And another word you need today is ‘balance’. Let us read, all of us?

Learners: Balance
Teacher: Let us read, all of us?
Learners: Balance
Teacher: Let us read, all of us?
Learners: Balance
Teacher: Balance means to stand steady.

[SL writes the word ‘balance’ on the board.]

Balance means to stand steady. To have the same weight each side. To have the same weight on each side. Another word we are going to come across is ‘cools’. Not hot.

[SL writes the word ‘cools’ on the board.]

Let us read, all of you?

Learners: Cools
Teacher: Now let us read all the words, all of you?
Learner 1: Not hot.
Teacher: Yes, who can help? Circulation. All of us?
Learners: Circulation.
Teacher: Circulation. Now this, all of you?

[SL points to the word ‘rises’ on the board.]

Learners: Rises
Teacher: Rises. Now this, all of you?

[SL points to the word ‘balance’ on the board.]

Learners: Balance
Teacher: Balance. Now this, all of you?

[SL points to the word ‘cools’ on the board.]

Learners: Cools
Teacher: Cools
Learners: Cools
Teacher: Cools
Learners: Cools
Teacher: Cools
Learners: Cools
Teacher: Cools. Very good. How do you read this word? Who will read it?

[SL points to the word ‘circulation’ on the board.]

Yes, you?
Learner 2: Circulation
Teacher: Very good, all of you?
Learners: Circulation
Teacher: Now this one? Yes?
Learner 3: Rises
Teacher: Very good, all of you?
Learners: Rises
Teacher: Now this one? Yes?
Learner 4: Balance
Teacher: Very good, all of you?
Learners: Balance
Teacher: Now this one? Yes?
Learner 5: Cools
Teacher: Very good, all of you?
Learners: Cools
Teacher: Another name for the word ‘circulation’ how do we explain the word ‘circulation’?
Learner 6: To go...
[SL interrupts.]
Teacher: To go round something, yes. Now, how do we explain the word ‘rises’? Yes?
Learner 7: To go upwards.
Learner 8: To stand steady.
Learner 9: Not hot.

Another extract is provided from a Natural Science lesson at Mutshetshe covering the topic, *Water Pollution*. This example provides additional evidence that the kind of questioning techniques the teachers used in their role as curriculum decision-makers reinforced a particular style of pedagogical control over the flow of lessons. Note how the teacher repeatedly asked the same question until he received the list of answers he had been seeking:

Teacher: What kinds of pollution did we learn about last week?
Learner 1: Land, air
Teacher: Why is water important for us?
Learner 2: Cook food
Teacher: Good! Why is water important for us?
Learner 3: Drink
Teacher: Yes. Why is water important for us?
Learner 4: Wash
Teacher: Very good. Why is water important for us?
Learner 5: Clean
Teacher: Good. Why is water important for us?
Learner 6: Irrigate plants
Teacher: Yes. Why is water important for us?
Learner 7: Wash clothes
Teacher: Very good. Why is water important for us?
Learner 8: Used in factories
[MM2 writes these words and phrases on the board.]
A third example is provided from another Natural Science lesson on Matter observed at Khomisani. Note the manner in which the teacher used questions to create the illusion that her learners were actually learning something while she controlled and directed the lesson introduction:

Teacher: Do you know matter?
Learners: No
Teacher: Matter is anything that occupies space and has mass.
Learners: Matter is anything that occupies space and has mass.
Teacher: It has three phases, solid, liquid, gas. Coffee is solid, liquid and gas.

[WM2 holds up a juice bottle.]
Who can tell me the example of another liquid? Not juice.
[A lot of learners put up their hands]
OK, don’t tell me, this [the show of hands] means you understand. (Lesson Extract, Khomisani School, WM2, Matter, 15 November 1999)

A final example is provided to further illustrate this aspect of teacher control during a Human and Social Sciences lesson on Transport. The teacher, PM2 spent about ten minutes introducing his lesson to the learners. He did this by asking questions about the manner in which the learners in his class would travel to various destinations. The question and answer technique that PM2 used helped him to direct the lesson towards the organisational categories that he had already pre-determined. The following extract from the video transcription of the lesson reflects the nature of the exchange:

Teacher: Every day you travel from home to school, isn’t it?
Learners: Yes
Teacher: What do you use to travel from home to school?
Learner 1: Walk
Teacher: You foot it. Suppose you want to travel from here to Lebowakgomo, how would you go?

[Lebowakgomo is the nearest town, approximately 20km away.]
Teacher: You see, what kind of transport?
Learner 2: Car
Teacher: Or?
Learner 2: Bus
Teacher: Let me give you a chance to come and write ‘bus’ on the board.

[Learner 2 comes to the board and wrote ‘bus’.

Only a car and a bus?
Learner 3: Taxi
Teacher: Come and write ‘taxi’.

[Learner 3 does this.]

Suppose you were to travel from Pietersburg [now Polokwane] to Johannesburg, what kind of transport would you use? As he said before, that is transport. From Pietersburg to Johannesburg?
Learner 4: Aeroplane
Teacher: Who can write ‘aeroplane’? Come.

[A different learner writes it incorrectly on the board.]

Is it correct?
Learners: No
Teacher: Thabo, you try.

[Thabo also writes it incorrectly on the board.]
Let me help you.
[Teacher writes on the board, also incorrectly.]
Now, can you only use aeroplane, car, bus to travel from Pietersburg to Johannesburg? What other transport can you use?
Learner 5: Train
Teacher: Yes, train. Come and write it.

[Learner 5 does this.]

Let’s try to classify the different kinds of transport. We are having the air transport, and we are having the water transport, and the land transport, one, two, three, and the rail transport. (Lesson Extract, Letjatji School, PM2, Transport, 2 September 1998)

The style of pedagogical control illustrated in the examples provided has much in common with a behavioural/reductionist learning process which Capper and Jamison (1993) document as including learning that is totally regulated by the teacher. All of the interactions in the lessons were tightly indexed to the questions the teachers asked, a finding similar to Doyle’s (1992) review of research into classroom communication processes. Linking these examples of practice to the teachers as decision-makers reveals that the teachers positioned themselves in control of their lessons through the manner in which they asked
questions. Even though the teachers’ discourse did contain some elements of knowledge as practice that valued the role that learners could play in the process of acquiring knowledge, in their practice the teachers concentrated on a set of pre-ordained facts towards which they guided their learners. This calls into mind Ernest’s (1996) caution against implementing a form of discovery learning where learners are channeled towards the teachers’ pre-determined right answers. This authoritative position gave teachers considerable power to select who spoke, when they spoke, and what they spoke about.

The conclusions drawn about the teachers’ pedagogical control and their questioning techniques are not only supported by their discourse and practice but also by the data collected in the lesson observation schedule (see Appendix H). For example: Section 2.4, Use of Questions as a Teaching Tool, noted that in nearly three-quarters of the lessons observed the teachers asked questions that required one word answers, that chorused answers were evident in nearly half of the lessons observed and that in only one lesson did the teacher seek a more elaborated answer; Section 3.1, Concepts and their Explanation, detailed that it was only in two lessons that there was any evidence of learners being asked to explain the answers that they gave to questions posed by their teachers; Section 3.4, Knowledge in Use, noted that facts were the only knowledge in evidence in more than one-quarter of the lessons observed, and that in more than thirty of the forty-five lessons observed, the knowledge made available to the learners during the lessons came solely from the teachers; Section 5.1, Teacher Roles, documented that in more than half of the lessons observed it was the teachers who dispensed knowledge, directed the lessons and coached the learners; and Section 5.2, Learners’ Roles, noted that in less than one-quarter of lessons observed did individual learners answer questions, and in nearly half of the lessons it was noted that learners’ chorused answers together. The issues relating to pedagogical control are summarised in the table below as the first element in the teachers’ emerging knowledge as practice.
### TABLE 6.1: KNOWLEDGE AS PRACTICE – PEDAGOGICAL CONTROL

<table>
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<th>What does pedagogical control mean?</th>
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<td>• The teachers control and direct the flow of their lessons.</td>
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<tr>
<th>What examples are seen that typify this pedagogical control in practice?</th>
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<tr>
<td>• The teachers ask all of the questions.</td>
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<td>• The teachers pre-determine what the answers are.</td>
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<td>• Learners are required to recall simple facts in response to questions.</td>
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<td>• These facts are in the form of single words or short phrases.</td>
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<td>• The learners often answer in chorus.</td>
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### GROUP LEARNING ACTIVITIES:

**Privileging form over substance**

The second category of decisions that the teachers made related to the kinds of learning activities that were developed for learners and the manner in which these learning activities were used during lessons. While theorising about the types of activities that lead to substantive learner-centred practices, Brodie et al (2002) argue that these activities must have both “form and substance” (p.100), and that if they do not, then the teachers are merely playing with the notion of learner-centredness. The following quotes taken from interviews at three schools illustrate how the privileging of form over substance of what should be learnt from these lessons was something that the teachers identified with OBE:

> The thing is, you would have come to class there [in the past], found me standing in the front of learners, doing a lot of talking, budging [lecturing], for almost thirty-five minutes, if the lesson was thirty minutes! There would be no opportunity for children to take part in my lessons. No chance to have active part. Now, after the implementation of OBE, the teacher is actually planning a number of learning activities, which are engaging the learners throughout the lesson, and doing something. There is talking, sharing, understanding. The teacher instead of standing in front moves around the room as a facilitator, involving the learners. (Focus Group Interview Number 2, Letajti School, WK, 12 May 1998)
Now the focus is on skills and critically understanding....Learning activities were not involved in the past. The children didn’t go through the process of learning. If I taught Maths, I did one example and then gave a test. The children never practised. They didn’t get a chance to try before assessment. OBE gives children the chance to acquire the learning skills. To go through a learning process before assessment happens. (Focus Group Interview Number 1, Mashamba School, AM, 27 May 1998)

IN: The old curriculum encouraged pupils to memorise content of the lesson, whereas the new curriculum encourages pupils to know skills of doing things….

MN: I want the education based on outcomes, not content. I like skills not content. When the children grow up they will be able to do things for themselves. (Focus Group Interview Number 2, Mutshetshe School, 4 August 1998)

A range of classroom observation data from the President’s Schools is used to show that the teachers in the project privileged the form of their group learning activities over their substance. In practice this meant that the technical aspects of the activities were more important to the teachers than what their learners might possibly learn from these activities.

In a Natural Science lesson on Animal Teeth observed at Letjatji on 19 April 1999 the learners were given two group learning activities to complete. The first activity was presented to the learners through the worksheet in the figure below. Note the kind of task the learners were expected to perform together and consider the extent to which this would help them understand the scientific issues relating to animal teeth.
ANIMALS AND THEIR TEETH

Animals are grouped. Some animals live on plants and are called plant eating animals or Herbivores. Some animals eat other animals and are called Flesh eating animals or Carnivores. Animals which eat plants as well as other animals are called Omnivores.

Animals have four kinds of teeth. The incisors, canines, pre-molars and molars. Each type of teeth has a specific function, for example, the incisors are used to cut food. Canines are used to tear food and pre-molars and molars are used to grind.

Read the above paragraphs. Underline the Nouns that you have identified and write those nouns on the space provided below.

1. 
2. 
3. 
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5. 
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11. 
12. 
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15. 
16. 
17. 
18. 

FIGURE 6.1: ANIMAL TEETH (ACTIVITY ONE)
Once the groups had completed this worksheet, they were then instructed to assess how other groups had performed during the activity. A second worksheet was circulated to each group for them to record their assessment observations:

**LETJATJI PRESIDENTIAL SCHOOL**

1S ASSESSMENT  
GRADE SIX  
TOTAL : TEN (10)  
DATE : ____________

**PEER ASSESSMENT**

Assess the work of another group by inserting a CROSS (X) in one block of either fair or good in all the questions.

1. They were working together.  
2. The group followed the instructions.  
3. The group answered all the questions.  
4. There was good communication.  
5. Every member took part in discussions.

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KEY  
FAIR = 1  
GOOD = 2

MARKS OBTAINED: ________
TEACHER’S SIGNATURE: ___________

**FIGURE 6.2: ANIMAL TEETH (ACTIVITY TWO)**

I read this second worksheet while the teacher distributed it and was convinced that the learners would be unable to complete it, as they had not watched other groups’ performances during the first activity. I was interested to find out how the teacher would respond to what I perceived would be a dilemma, and wrote about the incident in my field notes:
The strangest thing happened towards the end of the lesson. The teacher gave each group another worksheet [see Figure 6.2 above]. They had to assess how another group worked during the lesson. I thought that would be a huge problem because the learners had not been told that they would assess the performance of other groups. But what amazed me is that the children - or as usual one learner in the group - happily filled in the worksheet and the teacher collected it. I suppose they just guessed and filled in anything! (Field notes, Letjatji School, LS1, Animal Teeth, 19 April 1999)

Another example of how the decisions the teachers made resulted in form being privileged over substance is provided from the lesson on Transport quoted from in the previous section of this chapter. Groups of learners collected an extensive array of pictures according to the teacher’s categories of air transport, water transport, land transport and rail transport. The teacher then distributed one copy of the following worksheet to each group.
The instructions on the worksheet made it clear that it was only the teacher’s examples that were really acceptable for assessment purposes even though the learners had collected a much more extensive range of pictures on their own. When it came to the ‘important’ issue of the allocation of marks, the teacher’s knowledge was much more important than the learners’ knowledge; hence he
provided a list of transport with which the learners had to work while their own more extensive collections of pictures were ignored. The form that the worksheet in Figure 6.3 took was more important to the teacher than the substance of what the learners discovered about transport from collecting their own pictures and categorising them in their own way.

An extract from the discussion interview held immediately after this lesson shows how PM2 privileged the form of learner participation in his lesson, as nowhere did he remark on the substance of what his class learnt:

LM: What do you think the strengths of your lesson were?
PM2: I think it’s when the kids were taking part in the activities, participating. And the children were free to report back to the rest of the class.

LM: What were the weaknesses of your lesson?
PM2: I spoke too much Sepedi in my lesson. I was translating too much. The first activity, the one with the cutting was too long, they took too long and therefore I ran out of time.

LM: In what ways is this lesson different and/or the same with how you taught in the past?
PM2: Even though I did transport in the past, it was part of the syllabus, it was different. It was different because in the past the teacher spoke too much. I would have shown pictures and told the children what they were. Now the children participate in the lesson, they find the pictures that they want to talk about, not me. They could choose the ones they wanted to talk about, not me. (Lesson Discussion Interview, Lejtjji School, Transport, 2 September 1998)

During this interview it became increasingly clear that apart from the group learning activity, which was eventually ignored by PM2, the practice he described as current was essentially identical to the practice he described as past. Embedded in his idea of a ‘new’ practice was his tendency to play on the notion of active learning characterised by time-consuming activities that once completed were not referred to again. Brophy and Alleman (1991) raised cautions about the over-emphasis of such time-consuming activities that are loosely based on constructivist approaches to learning. This type of understanding of active learning can emerge from what Walkerdine (1984) calls
an overly romanticised progressivism of learner-centred experiences. In PM2’s practice, his romanticised progressivism could be seen through the assumption he made that pedagogically the practice of OBE learning activities was best confined to a group work technique, and that working within this structure was more important that what learners would learn from the activity. These assumptions were made by many teachers and resulted in a new pedagogical orthodoxy arising around group work in the six schools; an orthodoxy which was exemplified in the words of one teacher who said, “OBE means group work” (Focus Group Interview Number 2, Baropodi School, PS, 13 May 1998). This conclusion is also supported by evidence collated in the lesson observation schedule (Appendix H) where it was documented in Section 4.1, Group Work, that what the teachers’ defined as group work was used in more than three-quarters of the lessons observed.

Brodie et al (2002) argue that in order to achieve a substantive notion of a learner-centred curriculum, certain forms of classroom organisation are better than others. In particular, they suggest that one of these organisational forms is group work as it can lead to a more meaningful curriculum in the classroom, where the form and the substance of learning is addressed. However, they caution, “group work can also be used in ways which do not achieve the substance of learner-centred teaching” (ibid, p. 100). The following exemplar quotes suggest that the teachers’ understanding of group work was such that the notion of active learning was used to mask the fact that their teaching was really just about telling:

The way we do classroom seating is different, now they [learners] are in groups. They used to discuss rather than share knowledge with each other. (Focus Group Interview Number 2, Khomisani School, WM1, 3 August 1998)

OBE does not mean that learners should always work in groups....OBE is always groups at first, but later they [teachers] see it is not always groups. I also thought that [group work was the only method] at first, it was my emphasis, but if you understand OBE then sometimes the learners work in pairs or groups, but not always. (Pair Interview, Letjatji School, JM1, 26 October 1998)
By grouping pupils in class during an OBE lesson is then that pupils get chances to share ideas in their group. But during a content-based lesson pupils were just listening to teachers’ ideas. Because children learn through play, and by giving them activities, all children become involved in the lesson, and those that do not like learning, they also become involved because of that activity. (Focus Group Interview Number 2, Mutshetshe School, IN, 4 August 1998)

SM1: Children are now in groups. I no longer consider the content before the pupils themselves. Group work depends on the lesson I have prepared. Sometimes I use pairs. It depends on the activity. I do, maybe an hour of group work a day….

AN1: The physical setup in our classrooms has changed (Focus Group Interview Number 1, Nwaxinyamani School, 28 May 1998).

It is quite difficult to produce textual extracts from lessons to show that, in fact, the learners participated in very little collaborative work in the lessons observed, and that the new pedagogical orthodoxy was in fact identical to the orthodoxy of past teaching techniques. As an alternative, two learning activities are presented to show the kinds of tasks developed by teachers and to illustrate how difficult it would have been for groups of learners to meaningfully and collaboratively address them.
A Farmer

A farmer had a flock of sheep, a herd of cattle and a pack of dogs in his farm. He ploughed his fields using a span of oxen. One day early in the morning a pack of dogs attacked his sheep. Fortunately he managed to scare them away with his gun. There was a troop of monkeys and a swarm of bees in his farm. There was a big dam full of water where his cattle and sheep drank water. In the dam there was a catch of fish.

In the store room there was a stack of hay which he fed his cattle and sheep when there is drought. In front of his house there was a very beautiful flower garden. During summer season he picked a bouquet of flowers which he sold to the market. The house was surrounded by a clump of trees. In his vegetable garden he planted different crop of vegetables. Near the dam he had a big field with many fruit trees. During harvest season he packed variety of crate of fruits like orange, a tray of peaches and a bunch of grapes. He sold them to nearby town.

Answer the following questions:

1. What did a farmer use to ploughed his fields?
2. What attacked his flock of sheep one day in the morning?
3. Where does a catch of fish live?
4. In which season did the farmer sold his flowers to the market?
5. What surrounded the farmer’s house?
6. Name three things which the farmer sold near the town.
Identify and name the following weather conditions:

1. 
2. 
3. 
4. 
5. 
6. 

FIGURE 6.5: WEATHER CONDITIONS
The conclusions drawn from these examples are also supported by a series of field notes recorded at different schools. These field notes reflect a growing concern over the impact the teachers’ understanding of group work was having on learning in the schools, given that the theoretical basis that underpinned collaborative learning as a pedagogical strategy was not really taken into account. The first quote is from field notes recorded while the worksheet in Figure 6.5 was used in a lesson:

I saw that even though this lesson looked like a group work lesson, most of the group members sat passively watching while one child completed the worksheet (Field notes, Baropodi School; LM1, *Weather Conditions*, 25 November 1997).

This activity was for pairs rather than for groups. Quite a change, or so I thought! But yet again, one learner did the work while the other one watched. This must be so boring and such a waste of time. (Field notes, Baropodi School, EM1, *Healthy Bodies and Healthy Food*, 25 November 1997)

This was a class with fifty-two learners. The class was divided into groups for the activity, with each group having at least eight members. This was very problematic because the activity was to underline nouns and pronouns printed on one piece of paper! They [learners] could not even see the paper, never mind make a contribution! One learner completed the task. It never ceases to amaze me that the children are so well behaved and co-operative as they sit and watch and actually do nothing at all. (Field notes, Khomisani School, MM, *Nouns and Pronouns*, 8 November 1999)

A confident girl [called Lorraine!] asks the teacher questions. She also passes her book around the group and lets her friends copy her answers! (Field notes, Mutshetshe School, MN, *Evaporation and Condensation*, 9 November 1999)

The conclusions drawn from the field notes and learning activities about group work are also supported by data collected during the lesson observation process (Appendix H). For example, Section 4.1, *Group Work*, noted that in two-thirds of the thirty-five group work lessons the activity was not really a group activity at all. These arguments are summarised in the following table.
TABLE 6.2: KNOWLEDGE AS PRACTICE – FORM AND SUBSTANCE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What does form and substance mean?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• The teachers privilege the technical form of learning activities over the substance of what learners are meant to learn from them.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What examples are seen that typify this privileging in practice?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Activities are randomly selected.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• There is little connection between activities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Learners sit in a group seating arrangement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• One learner in each group completes the activity while the others watch passively.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There can be little doubt that making sound pedagogical and content decisions is extremely important for teachers who wish to teach lessons that are comprehensible to their learners, and that result in the learners learning something new. It also goes without saying that having a sound pedagogical and content knowledge on which to base these decisions provides teachers with the authority and ability to identify and to put into place the most powerful examples, illustrations, analysis, explanations and demonstrations of any teaching moment. But, in the lessons observed, the decisions the teachers made revealed that their understanding of practice was confined to a limited number of techniques, as they did not have an array of pedagogical skills on which to draw while they implemented their new knowledge as practice.

Chisholm (1993) argues that fundamental pedagogics left teachers with a set of approaches that actually block the development of critical and innovative teaching strategies; I suggest that in this project, what the teachers called ‘group work’ was one such approach. Group work became a euphemism for what was essentially past pedagogical style with all other possibilities being marginalised. The technique that the teachers’ named group work became ‘the’ choice rather than ‘a’ choice; and it was often a choice that had little to do with co-operative or collaborative learning. The project believed that the implementation of OBE in the President’s Schools would extend the teachers’ range of pedagogical practices, but in fact it served to confine their repertoire to ‘old’ pedagogical techniques while at the same time creating an illusion that they were both different and better.
THE FACILITATOR IN PRACTICE

As was explained in the previous chapter, the role of the teacher as facilitator was one that was both situated in the discourse of curriculum authority established by the teachers and one that was emphasised in the official curriculum policy documents of that time. It also showed that it was through this role that the teachers' understanding of what constituted a learner-centred curriculum was formed. This section looks in detail at the kinds of lessons that emerged from this understanding, with a special focus on what teachers and learners actually did during lessons.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS:
Shifting the social climate in the classroom

In probing the complex manner in which learner-centred practices are played out in South African schools, Brodie et al. (2002) make a link between classroom practices and the social climate in the classroom. They argue that for a learner-centred curriculum to be successful, teachers need to create and maintain a socially supportive learning environment for learners. The teachers in the project had also begun to think about the social climate in their classrooms, which they expressed in the following ways:

MB: Children are not afraid of the teachers. They couldn’t answer a question before. In the little we have done at our school, it includes the children.

VL: Children can participate and argue with you. (Focus Group Interview Number 1, Baropodi School, 13 May 1998)

I am happy the relationship between myself and my learners is good….the relationship between the learners and the teacher is good [better] than the previous years. (Focus Group Interview Number 2, Khomisani School, SM4, 3 August 1998)
In the past, you know learners were very far from the teachers, in the communication. The learners, they did not talk to the teachers about duties, friends, because...afraid of the teachers. We [teachers and learners] were not friends, there was harsh communication. Now teachers are more closer to learners. Learners are so much freer to communicate, to ask questions. They have opportunities to ask. You work with them and create opportunities.....In the past, teaching, we did not deal too much with the attitude of the learner. But this time, our preparation, we plan to develop a positive attitude from learners themselves. We encourage basic communication, because in our lessons we try to find out what attitudes the learners have (Focus Group Interview Number 2, Letjatji School, WK, 12 May 1998)

ET: OBE promotes good relationships between children and children, and teachers and children. The new curriculum encourages pupils that they also know things that can help me as a teacher....Now in the class, pupils are free.... they started to feel free....In other words, situation in classes is totally changed as now teaching is child-centred....

IN: The pupils also feel free to ask questions when I am facilitating. Before they were shy and afraid of the teachers....OBE helped with pupils who were shy or afraid because when he or she share his ideas, others will help them and tell him how he could say that thing. Previously pupils take a teacher as a person who is always correct, that is why pupils were shy to say wrong things. Pupils feel that it is not good to tell incorrect things to a person who is always correct. Previously pupils were afraid even to speak in class because teachers do not have good relationship with children. If it happens that a child say wrong things, he or she will be cursed and beaten, but now we are no longer cursing them but giving them courage so that he will feel that even if I tell incorrect things it is not the end of his life. (Focus Group Interview Number 2, Mutshetshe School, 4 August 1998)

In learner-centred classrooms teachers are expected to be able to maintain friendly, caring relations with their learners while at the same time engage in substantive and extended conversations with them; conversations that ultimately lead to learning. This is one of the standards Newmann and Associates (1996) identified with “authentic pedagogy” (p. 18), where teachers help their learners improve their understanding of ideas or topics through meaningful conversations in socially supportive classrooms. The teachers in the project did try to create a comfortable working environment for their learners during their question and answer interactions, a conclusion that was supported by details in the lesson
observation schedule (Appendix H). For example, Section 5.1, *Teachers’ Roles*, documented that in less than one-sixth of the lessons observed was there any evidence of teachers having to discipline their learners in terms of their behaviour. However, this warmer social climate did not necessarily enhance learning opportunities in the classroom, as was recorded in the field notes quoted from below:

This is an enjoyable Maths lesson judging from the smiles and noisy fun the children seem to be having. Each group has a different number of cubes that they could construct into a long line of joined cubes. The children have to make their own ‘whole’ from cubes and they decide how many of their cubes to use. Each group also has a small black board and piece of chalk on which they write their answers. Once the children have written their sentences, each group gets a chance to report back to the other groups. The reporting takes this form: “This is my whole. The colour is light green. It has sixteen cubes. Here are two equal parts. In one part I have eight cubes. I’m going to cut my halves into quarters. In my quarter I have two cubes.” Even though this is fun, is it accurate? Shouldn’t the quarter be four, not two? (Field notes, Baropodi School, TM4, *Fractions*, 20 May 1998)

While the children enjoyed playing general knowledge, it certainly did not teach them anything about nouns that they didn’t already know. The categories were very basic - a leader, a country, a town, a boy’s name and a girl’s name. The teacher gives rules and then walks around the class. He has a warm manner and apologises to the children when he makes a scoring error. They all really enjoy playing the game - the teacher too! (Field notes, Letjatji School, PM2, *Proper Nouns*, 26 January 1998)

Even in what were becoming more socially supportive classrooms, there was little guarantee that actual learning would take place. This finding is similar to what Lingard *et al* (2001a; 2001b) found in the Queensland School Reform Longitudinal Study (QSRLS), where the presence of the socially supportive element of productive pedagogies was observed consistently more often than any of the more cognitive dimensions of classroom practice. Both Newmann and Associates (1996) in America and Lingard *et al* in Australia argue that all elements of their pedagogies need to be in place for them to lead to intellectually rigorous classroom practices. It seems that many teachers the world over find it
easier to create a socially supportive classroom than they do to maintain this social support, yet still give due attention to the quality of learning. While the teachers in the project also experienced this difficulty, it should be noted that even beginning to shift their practice towards more socially supportive classrooms marks an important step that they took in fundamentally changing the harsh classroom environments that characterised the apartheid era. The repertoire of sophisticated pedagogical practices that could have enabled these teachers to implement affirming interpersonal shifts, yet still be able to pay attention to learning in the actual lesson, were as yet unavailable to the teachers. This made it very difficult for teachers to link a socially supportive environment to meaningful learning experiences. These difficulties are expressed in the table below.

**TABLE 6.3: KNOWLEDGE AS PRACTICE – SOCIAL CLIMATE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What does social climate mean?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• The teachers create socially supportive interactive norms in their classrooms.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What examples are seen that typify these norms in practice?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• The learners are active during lessons.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The learners enjoy the activities.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**GROUP LEARNING ACTIVITIES:**

**Making a distinction between authority and responsibility**

This section continues analysing the teachers’ understandings of their new role as facilitators and probes their perceptions about the new learner role that was needed to complement their role as facilitators. This new learner role was considered to be very different from the more traditionally passive role that learners had played in the classrooms of the apartheid era and was directly related to the learner-centred nature of OBE. In putting these new roles into practice, the teachers made a distinction between their authority in terms of organising lessons and activities, and their learners’ responsibility in terms of completing these activities during lessons. This distinction led teachers in all six
schools to make certain assumptions about what they and their learners were meant to do during OBE lessons. For example:

They [teachers in the participatory community] said they like it [OBE] because you don’t have to work as hard (Focus Group Interview Number 1, Baropodi School, SN1, 13 May 1998).

EM2: They [learners] can do things on their own.
PS: They can teach themselves, they know a lot.
ZM: I am so impressed because of this project, our work as facilitators, pupils have developed their own self-reliance and confidence. (Focus Group Interview Number 2, Baropodi School, 13 May 1998)

The children participate [in our lessons] more than the teacher himself.... In the past, we were like preachers at church, the children had no chance to express themselves.....In the past, teachers talked and children knew nothing. (Focus Group Interview Number 1, Khomisani School, SN2, 3 August 1998)

Pupils have more work to do than the teacher, the teacher is the supervisor. She helps those with problems and checks on those who don’t have problems....The new curriculum brings challenges, because the learners are the ones who are involved more than the teacher and this made people [teachers] to be motivated....The teacher as a supervisor in the classroom gives learners work to do and he or she does the follow-up, by checking the learners’ work. (Focus Group Interview Number 2, Khomisani School, SM4, 3 August 1998)

PM1: As they [learners] stay in groups, learners who quickly understand than others, they help by correcting others with respect. For example, spelling or identifying correct answers when identifying names of countries on a map....

LS1: In the past the teacher was controlling the class, but now when coming to discipline, it’s controlled by the children in the group. If one is out of order, they are able to discipline each other....Children discipline each other verbally by calling to order one member of the group who was out [of order]. If they are given work, they share the work in such a manner, that the one who was out of order, got more work than the others. (Focus Group Interview Number 1, Letjatji School, 12 May 1998)

BS: They [learners] are the ones who work the most. That is, the teacher simply guides them on how to tackle a given task. A lot of spadework is thus done by the learners....

AM: Learners take responsibility for their own learning. (Focus Group Interview Number 1, Mashamba School, 27 May 1998)
TM3: More activities are done by pupils. But before, teachers did all the work.

MM2: Pupils are finding skills in doing things by themselves. It is not the teacher who tells them the skills to do things.

MR: The pupils are the ones who do most of the work. Maybe he [an observing teacher] would be motivated when he sees that I gave few instructions and didn’t talk much to the children.

AN2: Pupils have to drive to the point on their own [learn on their own]. (Focus Group Interview Number 1, Mutshetshe School, 4 August 1998)

But immediately you start [teaching OBE lessons], learners do more activities than the teachers themselves. They must do things on their own, when coming to work. Being free means that the pupils must work on their own and talk more in the classroom. (Focus Group Interview Number 2, Mutshetshe School, ET, 4 August 1998)

TM2: Pupils take responsibility for their own learning.

SM1: We support...each other and the children are more committed to learning. The children are now aware of their responsibilities. They don’t depend on the teacher. (Focus Group Interview Number 1, Nwaxinyamani School, 28 May 1998)

It needs to be noted that the teachers’ perception that their learners were now active, in the sense that they all participated in tasks in the classroom, was actually contradicted in the lesson observation schedule, where it was recorded that in one-third of the lessons observed the learners were very passive (Section 5.2, Learners’ Roles, Appendix H).

In one school the distinction between what teachers and learners were responsible for was taken to an extreme length where learners were expected to ensure that their teachers were actually in the classroom to begin teaching. One could argue that this was a perverse understanding of the responsibilities that active learners should assume in OBE classrooms:

They [learners] are free to talk to the teacher, they are no longer scared. They can even come to call us in the staffroom if we are late! We have to come to class. (Focus Group Interview Number 1, Letjatji School, PM1, 12 May 1998)
JM1: The learners call us to class! They say, “Ma’am, it is your period, now come and attend to us!” Learners are responsible for their own learning. By so doing, they indicate that it is their responsibility to learn and work. They also enjoy freedom of communication with their teachers....

WK: They will now call us [to class] more than once. (Focus Group Interview Number 2, Letjatji School, 12 May 1998)

Many examples are provided from the teachers’ practice to illustrate the result of the distinction the teachers made between authority and responsibility. This distinction is best seen through analysing what took place during group learning activities that the teachers developed for their learners, as this is potentially when learners would have been the most active. The first example is taken from a lesson on Gender observed at Mashamba School. Note in particular the instructions that the teacher gave to the learners for the following group learning activity.

![Figure 6.6: Gender](image)

An extract from the feedback that took place after the learners had completed this group activity is provided below. Note the teacher’s lack of reaction when it became obvious that the learners had misunderstood his instructions on the worksheet:
Teacher: Listen here. Let us pay attention to this group. The first one is, “The boy is going to school”. What did you agree upon?

Learner 1: The girl is going to school.

[At this point I expected the teacher to indicate that the group had misunderstood the instructions on the worksheet, as the answer required was ‘male’.]

Teacher: She said, the girl is going to school. Is she wrong, or right?

Learners: Right.

Teacher: And number B?

Learner 2: His son is ill.

Teacher: His daughter is ill. She said, his son is ill. Is it right or wrong?

Learner 3: Right.

Learner 4: My grand doctor is living in Johannesburg.

Teacher: No?

Learner 5: My granddaughter is living in Johannesburg.

Teacher: Can you write it for me?

[Learner 5 writes ‘granddaughter’ on the board.]

Number D?

Learner 6: My uncle is a teacher in Thoyohandou.

Teacher: My aunt is a teacher in Thoyohandou. Just write for us.

[Learner 6 writes ‘aunt’ on the board.]

Number E?

Learner 7: My grandfather…female.

Teacher: What should she write there?

Learner 8: My grandfather is a person.

Teacher: Not a person.

Learner 8: My grandfather is a personal.

Teacher: No. My grandfather is a pensioner. (Lesson Extract, Mashamba School, NM, Gender, 15 October 1998)

It did not seem to matter to the teacher that generally the learners misinterpreted the instructions given on the worksheet, nor did it seem worthy of comment that one group had indeed tried to follow the printed instructions. Learner 7’s group gave the answer “female” for sentence 5, which was the correct response given the instructions on the worksheet. In addition, this group were alert to the fact that the other groups had done this activity differently; hence they also gave the answer “grandfather”. NM did not help his learners negotiate and construct pathways towards socially acceptable knowledge, as is required by a facilitator. Even if, during the activity, NM realised that his instructions were confusing and that they were open to misinterpretation and the activity could have been done in
another way, one would have expected him to make some comment. This is suggestive of gaps in crucial pedagogical knowledge that would have given NM insight into doing what Ball ad Cohen (1999) refer to as listen and “read children to know more about what they are thinking and learning” (p. 9) as they engage in activities together. In fact, NM confounded problems relating to the meaning inherent in the lesson when he told Learner 8 that the grandfather was “not a person”. A possible explanation for NM’s lack of reaction to the learners’ misinterpretation could relate to his understanding of a learner-centred curriculum, and the roles that teachers and learners were expected to fulfil in such a curriculum. Possibly NM believed that he was responsible for developing the activities and his learners were responsible for completing these activities based on whatever interpretation they arrived at together. This particular teacher’s lack of response to the group learning activities was also noted more generally in the lesson observation schedule (see Appendix H) where Section 5.1, Teachers’ Roles, documented that teachers gave learners feedback to their responses in only one-eighth of the lessons observed.

In the second example the teacher also neglected to provide meaningful responses to what his learners said during the lesson on Transport quoted from earlier. In fact, the only comments that the teacher did make actually hindered learning:

Teacher: Now those are different kinds of transport, isn’t it?
        [PM2 refers to words he wrote earlier on the board: bus, taxi, train, and aeroplane.]
Learners: Yes
Teacher: Now let’s think about the past, about our forefathers, our ancestors. Let’s think about them. What kind of transport do you think they were using by them? Old transport. Do you think they were using aeroplanes, or were using taxis?
Learner 1: Sledge
        [The local name given to a large container that is dragged by a person or by an animal.]
Teacher: Sledge
        [PM2 adds ‘sledge’ it to the list already on the board.]
Learner 2: Wagon
Teacher: Wagon
[PM2 writes ‘wagon’ on the board.]

Learner 3: Camel
Teacher: Camel
[PM2 writes ‘camel’ on the board.]

There are so many, isn’t it?

Learners: Yes
Teacher: Now I want you as groups to do this activity. The modern and the traditional, the old and the new. In the other column you write the new, and in the other column you write the traditional. Now there [the column for old transport] we only have sledge, wagon, and camel. So you are going to add some old types of transport. (Lesson Extract, Letjatji School, PM2, Transport, 2 September 1998)

This teacher accepted the extremely unlikely, if not impossible response that people who lived near Letjatji used camels as a means of transport in the past. I would suggest that the teacher knew this was an incorrect answer and that this is an indication of how he understood authority and responsibility in a learner-centred classroom. In PM2’s opinion, his responsibility may not have included helping learners negotiate the construction of acceptable knowledge as his authority was confined to developing the activities. Possibly, he also thought that as learners are required to construct their own meaning, then whatever constructions they arrive at had to be accepted, even if they were inaccurate or improbable.

A third example is provided from a lesson on Matter where the teacher gave learners instructions for the activity, but once the activity began she took no further responsibility for the outcome. The following extract illustrates the instructions the teacher gave and the outcome of the activity:

Teacher: In groups, write down anything which is solid, liquid or gas. Name them. Anything you know that falls under the three headings. I give you six minutes.

[Learner 1 writes on the board.]
Teacher: OK, group A?
Learner 1: gas - bad air
Teacher: That is carbon dioxide.
Learner 1: wall, flower
The teacher gave no reasons why a stone is not liquid, nor did she react when learners 5 to 11 merely recited lists of words with no indication as to whether they were solid, liquid or gas. This type of practice is surely not what the designers of the OBE curriculum in South Africa would have intended to happen in a learner-centred classroom where the teacher was a facilitator and where the children were actively learning about new and interesting issues.

The next example comes from a lesson on the Effects of Road Accidents, which was observed at Khomisani. The class was shown a picture of a traffic accident in an urban setting involving a pedestrian and a car and was told to complete an activity in their groups. The teacher wrote the activity instructions on the chalkboard in this way:
1. Write about the effects of accidents you have come across.
2. Write the results of the accident.

The extract below shows how the teacher neglected to indicate whether or not the answers given during the feedback session were acceptable, though in some cases he did re-draft the learners’ responses on the board. These re-drafts are reflected in brackets in the extract and show that the teacher’s input seemed to be restricted to correcting grammar rather than enhancing what the learner’s had said about the effects of road accidents:

Teacher: Group 3?
Learner 1: 1 Road accident.
3 rain
3 mist
4 road kills a man (A man is killed.)

Teacher: Group 8?
Learner 2: 1 damage (The car is damaged.)
2 lives (People lost their lives.)

Teacher: Group 7?
Learner 3: 1 Economy
2 car accident
3 car is economy
4 people is economy

Teacher: Group 5?
Learner 4: 1 damage (The car is damaged.)
2 The people is dying (People dead.)
3 Motorist is damaged

Teacher: Group 12?
Learner 5: 1 mist
2 rain
[EB suddenly interrupts the feedback with a question.]

Teacher: What do we do if somebody is injured in an accident?
Learner 6: hospital

Teacher: We take to hospital. What do we call the car that takes them to hospital?
Learner 7: ambulance

Teacher: This costs more, and then there is the mortuary, which costs money and the funeral cost money...The lesson is over.
(Lesson Extract, Khomisani School, EB, Effects of Road Accidents, 15 November 1999)
As early as 1916, Dewey had expressed doubts about activities that underestimated the need for adult guidance and depended too much on children’s innate abilities to make sense out of experiences.

The last extract provided is taken from the lesson on the *Circulation of Air* quoted from earlier in this chapter. This extract is taken from the lesson demonstration that was immediately followed by the group learning activity:

Teacher: You will answer questions after you observe the experiment. Now, what happened to air when it is heated? I think you do not know. So what you are going to do is to observe that. When the air is heated, what happens when the air is heated? When air is heated, we are going to see, when I heat the air, we are going to see that hot air rises. Then you will see it when I am doing this experiment. I am going to hang this paper cup on this ruler. The paper cup must look balance.

[SL attaches two inverted paper cups to pieces of string suspended from a ruler resting on a stand. Under one cup is an unlit candle. At this moment the cups are not evenly balanced.]

This group come and stand here, this here and so on so that you can all see.

[Some learners move from their desks and stand around the experiment. All the learners can see the experiment table.]

I am going to light the candle. I say that the air is around us, and the air around us is called the atmosphere. These paper cups must be balanced so that we can see what is happening.

[SL readjusts the cups, but they are still not evenly balanced.]

In this paper cup there is air, there is called air. We want to see whether the hot air rises. While the air is moving around. The paper cup will lose balancing. Let us observe. What do you see from the cup that is heated? What do you think?

[Even though she waits, there is no response from the class.]

Learner 1: [Tshivenda sentence]

Teacher: The one that is heated is moving, while the one that is heated, is still. That means that hot air rises.

[The paper cup above the candle swings slightly to...
and fro.] Right. Hot air is rising. Let us look again. I said the cup which is heated, the cup with the heated air is moving, which means it’s rising.

[SL writes on the board, ‘The cup with the heated air is moving’. She waits 5 minutes while the class observe.]

Let us look here. Another thing that we mustn’t forget is that when air is heated, it becomes lighter. When air is heated it becomes lighter.

[SL writes on board, ‘When air is heated it becomes lighter’.]

That is why you see the cup that is heated, losing balance.

[The two cups are still in the same position as they were at the start of the demonstration. SL waits another three minutes.]

What do you see now?

Learner 2: I see the flame.
Teacher: What do you see, yes?
Learner 3: The paper cup goes up.

[This has not actually happened.]

Teacher: Which one? The one on the left or the one on the right? The one on the left, over the fire goes up, which means hot air rises. The hot air rises. And that means that if hot air is lighter, the cold air is heavier. The cold air is heavier than the hot air.

[SL writes on the board, ‘The cold air is heavier than the hot air’.]

That is why the cup on your left side goes up. Which means the air on your left hand side is hot, hot air rises. Cold air is heavier than hot air.

[At this point the cup over the lit candle went on fire and SL had to quickly extinguish the fire.] Go and sit and look at the worksheet

[SL gives out the following worksheet.]
“Hot air mmm. The heated cup goes mmm. Cold air is mmm. Before one cup was heated the two cups were mmm. Hot air is mmm. Complete the statement. Air becomes lighter when it is mmm and mmm.”

Let us do like that. You pick the correct answer from the words in brackets. You first read and then you choose the correct one.

[SL walks around for about eight minutes while the learners try to complete the worksheet.]

The lesson is over. (Lesson Extract, Mashamba School, *Circulation of Air*, SL 14 October 1998)

Basically, the experiment being demonstrated by the teacher did not work yet she still expected her class to complete the activity based on what they had not seen. The teacher made all the conclusions herself, for example: hot air rises;
hot air is lighter; cold air is heavier; and yet she still expected her learners to take responsibility for completing the worksheet. The fact that the class did manage to complete the worksheet suggests that the task was either too easy or that it included scientific knowledge that these learners had already acquired. Suggesting that this and other lessons were too easy is supported by evidence collected during lesson observations (Appendix H) where the following was noted: Section 3.3, *Learners’ Misconceptions*, noted that there were no apparent misconceptions in more than half of the lessons observed; Section 3.5, *Teachers’ Content Knowledge*, documented that in more than half of the lessons observed it was difficult to ascertain how much the teachers knew about the lesson topic, and that none of the lessons could serve to confirm good subject knowledge on the part of the teacher (these points were annotated with the comment that the lessons were too basic for any conclusions to be drawn about teachers’ knowledge); Section 4.2, *Learning Tasks*, noted that poor, inappropriate or too easy tasks were observed in one-third of lessons, and that in only one-ninth of the lessons observed could learners’ thinking possibly be extended as a result of this lesson being taught. The arguments raised in this section and conclusions drawn are summarised in the table below.

**TABLE 6.4: KNOWLEDGE AS PRACTICE – AUTHORITY AND RESPONSIBILITY**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What does authority and responsibility mean?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• The teachers make a distinction between their authority for generating learning activities and their learners’ responsibility for completing these activities.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What examples are seen that typify this distinction in practice?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Learners’ misunderstandings are left unchecked by the teachers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The teachers provide learners with little or no support to complete the learning activities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The teachers provide learners with little or no support during the report back sessions on learning activities.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In conclusion, the teachers were aware that they had to create more socially supportive environments in their classrooms in line with the learner-centred nature of OBE. But they had difficulty doing this in practice while at the same time keeping a focus on enhancing learning. The teachers also acknowledged the changing roles that they and their learners had to play in OBE lessons, but
once again they had difficulty with implementing these roles meaningfully in practice.

The next section completes the deconstruction of lessons with specific reference to the practice that emerged out of the teachers’ image of themselves as connectors, a role directly related to the discursive practice of curriculum knowledge. It almost goes without saying that being able to make meaningful and relevant connections meaningful is highly dependent on the teachers’ sound content knowledge. In Shulman’s (1986) research into the knowledge base for teaching he describes teachers with a sound content knowledge as being able to move:

...beyond knowledge of the facts or concepts of a domain. It [competent content knowledge] requires understanding the structures of the subject matter. (p. 9)

This resonates with what Schwab (1978) said nearly three decades ago when he argued that teachers are required to understand both the substantive and syntactic structures of the disciplines that they teach. Teachers need to be able to not only define the accepted truths in a topic for their learners, they must also be able to show why something is worth knowing and how it relates to other equally worthwhile concepts and issues. Not only are expert teachers more than competent in content knowledge, they also know how best to link that knowledge appropriately to their pedagogical knowledge; essentially expert teachers are well skilled in pedagogical content knowledge (Shulman, 1987). Making meaningful connections between content and pedagogy lessens the potential problems that Shulman (1986) pointed out that can lead to content knowledge being as “useless pedagogically as content-free skill” (p.8).
THE CONNECTOR IN PRACTICE

In Chapter Five it was explained that pedagogical issues dominated the teachers’ curriculum discourses, and that discussions in and around teaching techniques took place at the expense of considerations of curriculum knowledge. This made the teachers much less mindful of the content of their lessons than they were of adhering to what they perceived to be the pedagogical demands of OBE. It also led the teachers to reduce curriculum knowledge to facts that they felt connected in some way to the everyday lived experiences of their learners. In their discourse, the teachers named their understanding of curriculum knowledge ‘relevance’ and openly spoke about limiting their teaching to what was seen in rural communities. This section studies the lessons that emerged in relation to this discourse and ascertains the extent to which the teachers’ practice was constrained by their understanding of curriculum knowledge.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS:
Learning contexts

In order to deliver lessons of intellectual quality, teachers need to select concepts that are relevant to the topics being taught, and then they have to teach these concepts in such a way that their learners acquire new and interesting knowledge about these topics. In other words, teachers need to be able to create relevant learning contexts wherein new learning can take place. This section argues that the teachers’ misunderstood the notion of relevance, that they confined it to selecting facts, which they connected in a contrived manner to the everyday lived experiences of their learners. A variety of examples are taken from lesson introductions to illustrate this.

The first example is taken from a lesson introduction to Weather Observation seen in Khomisani. The teacher tried to relate the concept of weather to the
learners’ lives during the question and answer session, but I suggest with very limited success:

Teacher: Why are you not wearing jerseys?
Learner 1: Hot
Teacher: Very good. Why are we not ploughing the fields?
Learner 2: No rain
Teacher: Very good. Everyone?
Learners: No rain
Teacher: What makes up weather?
Learner 3: rain
Teacher: And?
Learner 4: temperature
Teacher: Very good. Everyone, what makes up weather?

The contrived manner in which the teacher tried to relate the weather to the clothes that the learners wore did not create a context wherein children could meaningfully discuss a concept like precipitation.

The second example is taken from the Mashamba lesson on *Gender* quoted from earlier in this chapter, but from the beginning of the lesson. Note how the teacher located gender within the context of what he thought were family structures familiar to his learners during a question and answer session and then moved his lesson to a discussion of gender stereotyping:

Teacher: Now we are going to do LLC.
[He writes ‘LLC’ on the board.]
What does it mean?
Learners: Language, Literacy and Communication.
Teacher: Yes, Language, Literacy and Communication. Language, Literacy and ...?
Learners: Communication
Teacher: We are going to be doing gender.
[NM writes gender’ on the board]
Learners: Gender
Teacher: Isn’t it now we are going to do gender? Let us look at gender in the family, yes?
Learners: Yes
Teacher: Now, gender here, that means you have got male ones and
female ones. OK?

Learners: Yes

Teacher: Here is the family. Let’s say the parents are here. We have also got a grandfather who is the male one and the other is a grandmother.

[NM writes the word ‘parent’ and above that ‘grandparent’ which is subdivided into grandfather and grandmother. The word male’ is written in brackets after grandfather.]

Teacher: What is the grandmother?

Learner 1: Female one

Teacher: Yes

[He writes ‘female’ in brackets after grandmother.]

Now, say now, ‘My grandfather is ill’.

[NM writes the sentence on the board.]

Here is parents.

[Points to the word.]

Learners: Yes

Teacher: And here is the grandparents. The grandfather and the grandmother. OK?

[Points to the words.]

Learners: Yes

Teacher: Here is grandfather. Is it the male one or the female one?

Learner 2: The male one.

Teacher: Good, grandfather is the male one. If it was female, what are we going to say? Here is the male one. If we don’t want to say, my grandfather is ill, what can we say?

Learner 3: My grandmother is ill.

Teacher: Very good. This is a male gender, this is a female gender. OK?

[Points at the board.]

Learners: Yes

Teacher: Here are our parents. Here is the father and the, what?

[Writes the word, ‘father’ on board.]

Learner 4: Father and mother

Teacher: Good

[Writes ‘mother’ on board.]

Teacher: Now, let us say, the father and the mother down here and the children. OK?

Learners: Yes

Teacher: According to the children, there is a male one and a female one.

Learner 5: Boys are the male.

Teacher: And the girls?

Learner 5: Female

[NM writes ‘boy’ and ‘girl’ under father and mother.]

Teacher: Female, good. It means that in the family now, according to gender, we have grandfather and grandmother. OK? We
have the father and ...?

Learner 6: Mother
Teacher: Right. I want you to construct a gender sentence now. Brother, brother ...?
Learner 7: My brother is Mashudhu.
Teacher: My brother is Mashudhu. Very good.
[Mashudhu is generally used as a male name in Limpopo.]
[NM writes the sentence on the board.]
Now, if he didn’t want to say ‘brother’?
Learner 8: My sister is at home.
Teacher: No, only ‘brother’.
Learner 8: My sister is Mashudhu.
Teacher: Very good. Do you understand how the genders are?
Learners: Yes
Teacher: It means that there is the male ones and the female ones.
Learners: Yes
Teacher: It means that there is the male ones and the female ones.
Learners: Yes
Teacher: I am the male one and Lorraine is?
Learner 9: Lorraine is a woman.
Teacher: Very good. Lorraine is the woman. What else? I am a teacher. What is Lorraine?
Learner 10: A mistress [a term commonly used for female teachers]
Teacher: Very good. Lorraine is a mistress. I am now a doctor. What about Lorraine?
Learner 11: Lorraine is a nurse.
Teacher: Is there no male nurses? Only female?
Learner 12: No.
Teacher: No what?
Learner 12: There is no male nurses.
Teacher: She says there is no male nurses. Is she correct?
Learners: Right...wrong
Teacher: Who says ‘wrong’? Are there not male nurses?
Learner 13: Yes
Teacher: Where did you see them?
Learner 13: On the TV.
Teacher: And in the hospital? Any male nurses?
Learner 13: No
Teacher: OK. But there are male nurses.
(Lesson Extract, Mashamba School, NM, Gender, 15 October 1998)

Not only was the link between gender and the learners' lives contrived, but the basic meaning of the lesson was lost during this exchange when Learner 8 used the male name “Mashudhu” to refer to a “sister” and the teacher responded,
“Very good.” In addition, the gender stereotyping around nurses and doctors was dealt with in an extremely superficial way in this lesson, as the teacher did not create a relevant learning context wherein his learners would be able to interrogate such stereotypes.

The extract below is taken from the interview held with the teacher immediately after the lesson. It illustrates that NM ended up teaching what his learners already knew, namely the traditional structure of families, without paying any attention to the range of family structures that did actually exist in his classroom:

**LM:** What were your reasons for teaching this lesson?

**NM:** The reason was that children must know their family. Because while you are a child, you must know who you are related to, your mother, your father. They are still young, you see, children must know this is my father, my mother. A child must know that with a father goes a mother. If you go to visit some relative, you know where they fit. This can be related to the learners’ life, if they see their cousin, they must know how that cousin fits. According to my culture, family is very important. We celebrate and call people according to our family tree. If someone does not belong to a family, there is something wrong!

**LM:** What did you want the children to learn from your lesson?

**NM:** I wanted the children to participate as responsible citizens in the local, national and global environment [one of the specific outcomes taken from the curriculum policy document].

**LM:** I mean specifically your lesson on gender.

**NM:** The children must know the culture of genders. If I teach gender, they must know the male and also the female ones. I gave them vocabulary.

**LM:** But can’t family set ups be very non-stereotypical, for example, I am sure that here at Mashamba there are families where the father is far away, or where there is a divorce, and most certainly families with only boys or only girls - hence no sisters or no brothers.

**NM:** But they must think of family structures. If you don’t have a father, then I say that sometimes there is a divorce and stepparents. But according to our culture, we don’t speak of these things. You can just know it happens, but we don’t speak of it, and we don’t teach about it at school. Say you ask, “Who pays your school fees?” and there might be no father. It is very much difficult for me. I must visit the family and see. We still teach about the mother and father the rest is very much private. (Lesson Discussion Interview, Mashamba School, NM, Gender, 15 October 1998)
The following is a short extract from a question and answer introduction to a lesson on *Evaporation and Condensation* observed at Mutshetshe. It demonstrates how the teacher’s questions created a context that focused on something the children had already experienced in their lives, rather than one that would help the learners learn something new:

**Teacher:** What are these?

**Learner 1:** Towels.

**Teacher:** No, they are handkerchiefs.

**Teacher:** Who has one of these?

[Several learners raise their hands.]

**Good, you know them. What is coming out of the hair dryer?**

**Learner 2:** Air.

**Teacher:** When air comes out, what will happen to the hanky that is wet?

**Learner 3:** It will dry.

**Teacher:** Yes, the hanky moved. What will happen?

**Learner 4:** It will dry.

**Teacher:** What causes the hanky to dry?

**Learner 5:** Air.

**Teacher:** What else other than air causes the hanky to dry?

**Learner 6:** Sun.

**Teacher:** Yes, but there is no sun in here.

**Learner 7:** Hot air.

**Teacher:** Yes.

[MN sets up a kettle with the spout facing the chalkboard. While the water is beginning to boil, she gives a few instructions.]

You must observe what will happen to the water in the kettle.

[MN writes the following sentences on the board]

1 What happened to the water when it is heated?

2 What happened to the water when it boiled?

3 What happened to the smoke when it cooled?

Take out your class workbooks to answer these questions. We do it in groups.

[I observed one group where a girl did all of the work and then passed her book around for the others to copy.]
This lesson remained focused on experiences that the children had concerning boiling water, a conclusion that was also noted in field notes recorded during the lesson:

Surely these children have all seen water boiling in a pot, steam forming and then condensing on pot lids? As I look out the window, I see this exact thing happening with the School Nutritional Scheme run here! What new things are they learning about evaporation and condensation? (Field notes, Mutshetshe School, MN, Evaporation and Condensation, 9 November 1999)

In summary, the teachers did try to create what they thought were relevant learning contexts for their lessons, but they understood this to mean that they had to begin their lessons with something directly related to what their learners already knew or had experienced. Essentially, the teachers firmly believed that ‘good’ OBE teaching was located in the narratives of their learners’ lives and that this would automatically result in new learning taking place, almost regardless of what they did during the lesson. The teachers also seemed to believe that using these personal experiences would lead to substantial improvements in their teaching, and ultimately result in learning experiences of a high intellectual quality for learners. Section 3.4, Knowledge in Use, in the lesson observation schedule (see Appendix H) detailed that in nearly half of the lessons observed the knowledge in use could be considered to be relevant in some way to the learners’ experiences, but that this knowledge was in the form of facts. This section also recorded that in only one lesson were learners required to critically reflect on the knowledge available during the lesson.

The manner in which the teachers understood relevance also served to limit the scope of learning to the actual lessons being observed, as there did not seem to be any link between the lessons observed and other sections of the curriculum.
This conclusion is also supported by evidence collected in the lesson observation schedule (see Appendix H) where Section 2.1, *Lesson Integration*, detailed that in more than half of the lessons observed there was no link between the lessons observed and other lessons in the same learning area or in other learning areas, and that in one-ninth of the lessons observed there was evidence of artificial links between lessons. This section also noted that the knowledge in the lessons was subject specific in all but one of the lessons observed. Section 3.4, *Knowledge in Use*, documented that none of the teachers made the relationship between the knowledge in their lessons and other aspects of the curriculum apparent.

The consequences that these perceptions about relevance had on teaching and learning in the President’s Schools are summarised in the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 6.5: KNOWLEDGE AS PRACTICE – LEARNING CONTEXTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>What are learning contexts?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Teachers create learning contexts to help their learners acquire new knowledge.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>What examples are seen that typify these contexts in practice?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The teachers teach things the learners already know.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Knowledge is presented in the form of facts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Facts are connected to learners’ lives in a contrived manner.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The teachers spend very little time explaining these connections.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**GROUP LEARNING ACTIVITIES:**

*Concrete and abstract*

This section looks at the content knowledge embedded in the group learning activities that the teachers developed for their lessons. Just as the teachers had their own ideas about creating relevant learning contexts to begin their lessons, they also had their own ideas about how these contexts connected with learning activities. For example:
The child learns more easily when he starts from what he knows to the abstract….With our children, we start from what we know. Concrete to abstract. (Focus Group Interview Number 1, Letjatji School, PM1, 12 May 1998)

LM: If you could teach this lesson again, say to another class, is there anything you would change in the lesson?
NM: I should have started from the simple to the more complex. And give more details about each need. If you are teaching a lesson, you start from the simple to the complex. (Lesson Discussion, Mashamba School, Community Needs, 15 October 1998)

LM: Some people say that the new curriculum will never work in under resourced, rural schools. What do you think?
MM1: I don’t think the way they are thinking. In curriculum, if something is relevant to them then it is concrete. Then you build to the abstract. (Focus Group Interview Number 2, Nwaxinyamani School, 28 May 1998)

Many teachers used the Piagetian catch phrase, ‘from the concrete to the abstract’, to explain decisions they made about content. But this section shows that the manner in which the teachers understood the notion of ‘concrete to abstract’ was very different to Piaget’s epistemological considerations, and that it resulted in learning being constrained, rather than enhanced.

The following two-page worksheet was used by PM2 at Letjatji to end his lesson on Transport that was described earlier in this chapter. PM2 had begun his lesson by contriving a link between the topic and the learners’ lives. He did this by asking questions about how the learners travelled to and from school. The learners then worked together to collect pictures of different transport modes that they grouped according to categories given to them by the teacher. After completing an assessment activity, the teacher asked his learners to compare transport now with transport in the past. He then ended his lesson with the two-page activity presented below:
The Car

- When we look at the car from the front-side and we draw it then, then we call this drawing FRONT VIEW.
- When we look at the car from the left-side and we draw it then, then we call this drawing SIDE VIEW.
- When we look at the car from the top-side and we draw it then, then we call this drawing TOP VIEW.

If we agree on drawing the figures from three sides and if we draw this VIEWS every time at the same place we call this Projection Drawing.

Remark:

* A plane will always be indicated by a line and a point
  for example: plane 30 = roof in Top View
* A line will always be indicated by a line with an arrow
  for example: line 11 = the hood in Side View.

Questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Which number has mirror A in FRONT VIEW?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Which number has mirror A in TOP VIEW?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Which number has bonnet B in FRONT VIEW?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Which number has bonnet B in TOP VIEW?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Which number has bonnet B in SIDE VIEW?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Which number has headlight C in FRONT VIEW?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Which number has headlight C in TOP VIEW?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Which number has bumper D in FRONT VIEW?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Which number has bumper D in TOP VIEW?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Which number has bumper D in SIDE VIEW?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Which number has headlight E in FRONT VIEW?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Which number has headlight E in TOP VIEW?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Which number has headlight E in SIDE VIEW?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Which number has front wheel F in FRONT VIEW?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Which number has front wheel F in SIDE VIEW?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Which number has mudguard G in FRONT VIEW?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Which number has mudguard G in TOP VIEW?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Which number has mudguard G in SIDE VIEW?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Which number has bumper H in SIDE VIEW?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Which number has bumper H in TOP VIEW?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Which number has the hood I in SIDE VIEW?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Which number has the hood I in TOP VIEW?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Which number has the hood I in TOP VIEW?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Which number has the roof J in FRONT VIEW?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Which number has roof J in TOP VIEW?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Which number has roof J in SIDE VIEW?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Which number has front window K in FRONT VIEW?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Which number has front window K in SIDE VIEW?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Which number has the steering wheel L in FRONT VIEW?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Which number has steering wheel L in TOP VIEW?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Which number has steering wheel L in SIDE VIEW?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
FIGURE 6.8: TRANSPORT
This activity did not connect in any way with the previous activities in the lesson or even with the learning area being taught, namely Human and Social Sciences. The skills required to complete this very abstract activity had not been mentioned in the lesson up to this point and the learners were at a loss to know how to continue. The only link that was evident was that this technical drawing activity was of a car, one of the transport modes mentioned earlier in the lesson.

In another lesson, SM1 developed two group learning activities aimed at helping his learners understand why they lived in the village of Nwaxinyamani. The extract shows that in practice there was little connection between this aim and the actual activities that followed:

Teacher: Now what does “settlement” mean?

[Sepedi language exchange with learners. The teacher puts the following words on the board. Settlement; migration; military; war; army; hunt; hunger; fled]

What is “mfecane”? Mfecane is the resettlement of black people. Here are three things which would make you migrate by force. Hunger, war and grazing land. Today we are talking about people leaving because of war. At the end of this lesson I want you to know why you are living in Nwaxinyamani.

Shaka was a cruel man. He said you are no longer allowed to wear sandals, carry long spears. He was cruel and selfish. He wanted to expand his territory. Moshoeshoe accepted everyone. He built a strong Basuto nation. I am giving you a piece of paper. In your groups draw a spear used during Shaka’s time. Explain why you have drawn it like that.

[Learners look very confused, but all groups start to draw something.]

Now listen carefully. Here is homework. Get clay soil, you go and make for me a Zulu soldier. Get a piece of leather, I don’t know where. Make the Zulu about fifteen centimetres, dress him in a traditional way, Shangaan. Decide first if he is a soldier of Shaka or of Senzangakona. I want this on Friday. Ask your grandmother or grandfather. Write in your exercise books for Monday, where did people from Nwaxinyamani come from? What do they eat, what is their
dress? (Lesson Extract, Nwaxinyamani School, SM1, MfeCane, 21 April 1998)

The teacher did not provide the learners with any help for them to be able to complete these two activities. The aim of the lesson was fairly concrete, but the abstract knowledge required to complete these tasks was totally missing from the lesson. The result was a lesson where learning was definitely constrained, if not actually compromised, as none of the learners could complete these tasks. This finding was also noted in other lessons and was documented in the lesson observation schedule. Section 4.2, Learning Tasks, recorded that in more than one-fifth of the lessons observed the instructions given to learners were very unclear, and that in half of these lessons the learners did not know what to do.

In a lesson on Subtraction a teacher from Baropodi made brief connections between this mathematical concept and her learners and then moved very quickly to practising subtraction with her learners:

Teacher: Today we are going to learn subtraction, the taking away of numbers. Like look at these nine children sitting here. I want to take the boys away. That is how many girls left?

Learners: Six

Teacher: OK, look at the sums on the board.

[The following problems were already written on the board when the lesson began.]

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{a} \\
1 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 \\
- & 3 & 5 & 8 & 9 & 6 & 2 \\
\hline \\
\text{b} \\
1 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 \\
- & 5 & 2 & 8 & 3 & 4 & 6 \\
\hline \\
\text{c} \\
1 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 \\
- & 9 & 9 & 9 & 9 & 9 & 1 \\
\hline \\
\text{d} \\
7 & 1 & 2 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 \\
- & 1 & 2 & 2 & 4 & 8 & 9 \\
\hline 
\end{array}
\]
Teacher: What is the answer for ‘a’? Yes?
Learner 1: Ten minus two is eight, nine minus six is three, nine minus nine is nought, nine minus eight is one, nine minus five is four, nine minus three is six.
Teacher: Ok, that is 641 038...And for ‘b’?
Learner 2: Nought minus six it is impossible, take one from front and make the nought be ten. Ten minus six is four, nine minus four is five, and nine minus three is seven. (Lesson Extract, Baropodi School, MB, *Subtraction*, 16 February 1998)

The lesson continued in this way until all of the subtraction problems had been ‘solved’ according to this memorised pattern. Field notes recorded during the actual lesson noted:

In this lesson it seems as if teaching subtraction is about teaching a pattern. This pattern defines what the teacher teaches, but it also obscures the teachers' knowledge of subtraction. I do not know if she actually understands why this pattern works, nor do I know if the children understand the pattern, or they merely apply it. (Field notes, Baropodi School, MB, *Subtraction*, 16 February 1998)

The teacher’s belief that it was possible to move quickly from practising one concept to practising another without ever really teaching either was apparent in the lesson discussion held with her after this lesson:

*LM:* What lesson section went before this lesson?
*MB:* Addition.
*LM:* What lesson will follow this one?
*MB:* I will do word problems with addition and subtraction. Then I might even do multiplication and division.
*LM:* What was the lesson outcome?
*MB:* I was teaching the most important skills in mathematics, that of the basic operations. (Lesson Discussion, Baropodi School, *Subtraction*, 16 February 1998)
Other lessons observed also support the conclusion made that teachers moved with alarming swiftness between concepts, and that these concepts were not ever really explained to the class. For example, in more than half of the lessons observed it was noted that technical skills were the only skills in evidence and that these skills were merely practised, never taught. It was also noted that critical thinking skills were not apparent in any of the lessons observed (see Section 2.2, Lesson Skills, Appendix H). Field notes also record this issue in relation to a lesson on pronouns:

There appears to be a big conceptual jump in this thirty-minute lesson. At first the children merely have to identify basic pronouns, and then, seemingly out of nowhere, the teacher starts labelling these pronouns as demonstrative, personal, interrogative, possessive, relative. But he has not taught what these technical terms mean. I don't see how the children can be expected to understand this. (Field notes, Baropodi School, SN1, Pronouns, 20 May 1998)

Another teacher in Baropodi made her lesson preparation file available at the start of the lesson. Her plan, for what was meant to be a thirty-minute lesson, included an overly ambitious and extensive range of planned achievements:

Skills and Activities: naming, developing specific vocabulary, making notes, investigating, in groups investigating what happens when coal or wood is burnt or how it produces heat.
Methods: discussion, teacher talk, individual talk, group work
Specific Outcomes: Natural Science Specific Outcomes 1, 2, 7.

This plan shows that RM, like many of her peers, underestimated the amount of time the learners needed to understand the link between their lives and the concepts taught in lessons; she also underestimated the amount of time she needed to take to explain abstract concepts to her class. This understanding also did not take into account the fact that not all abstract concepts can be meaningfully related to the direct experiences of young learners.
The confusing mix of everyday concrete knowledge and unrelated abstract concepts did not result in the children learning about new and interesting issues during their lessons. The teachers began their lessons with facts that they believed were relevant to their learners, but then they followed these facts with abstract activities accompanied by little or no explanation. The teachers did not give their learners time to make their own connections between what they already knew and the new concepts being introduced to them. The connections that the teachers did make between what they understood their learners’ experiences to be, and the world beyond the classroom, were deeply flawed and profoundly decontextualised\(^2\). This resulted in an overwhelming predominance of everyday knowledge being presented through a bewildering array of abstract concepts.

I suggest that in this particular context, where the intellectual quality of lessons was already in serious question given the distinction the teachers made between pedagogy and content, ‘connectedness’ was dangerous in practice. Brodie et al (2002) argue that in a truly learner-centred curriculum, teachers not only have to keep their learners in focus at all times but they also have to keep their subject in focus at all time, as learner-centred must be complemented by subject-centred. In the context of the President’s Schools Project the teachers were not yet in a position to do this, as they were preoccupied with pedagogical issues. This led teachers to neglect the content knowledge of their lessons and to expect too much of their learners. These issues are summarised in the table below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 6.6: KNOWLEDGE AS PRACTICE – CONCRETE AND ABSTRACT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>What does concrete and abstract mean?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- The teachers confuse concrete and abstract knowledge.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>What examples are seen that typify this confusion in practice?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- The teachers do not explain how to complete abstract activities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- The learners are unable to successfully complete abstract activities.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^2\) Thanks to Ludo Heylen of the University of Leuven in Belgium for his comments on this point.
This marks the completion of the analysis that deconstructed lessons in order to make the teachers’ knowledge as practice explicit. It also ends the analysis of the practice that emerged from the three curriculum roles that were evident in all six schools, namely the teacher as decision-maker, the teacher as facilitator and the teacher as connector. The last section in this chapter focuses on analysing classroom practice in relation to the role of the teacher as leader, a role that was apparent only in Letjatji and Mashamba. It does this through reconstructing lessons in relation to how closely they are representative of the teachers’ knowledge as practice.

**THE LEADER IN PRACTICE**

Taking a critical and intensive look at the practice that emerged out of the participatory communities in Letjatji and Mashamba helps to consider the extent to which the actions of the teacher leaders served to enhance the teachers’ knowledge as practice in these two schools. Lessons from Letjatji and Mashamba are reconstructed and compared to a lesson that exemplifies the practice in the other four schools. This comparison helps to interrogate the assumption made in Chapter Two that there is a direct link between teacher leadership and improvements in teaching practice. The six examples that were used to identify the elements of the teachers’ knowledge as practice throughout this chapter are incorporated together in one analytical tool that was initially presented in Chapter Three. This tool (see Table 6.7 below) is organised according to the two main categories that defined the teachers’ knowledge as practice, namely knowledge of pedagogy and knowledge of content. In the tool, the knowledge of pedagogy is taken from the teachers’ question and answer introductions, while the knowledge of content comes from their group learning activities. This tool is used to consider what was the ‘same’ as well as what was ‘different’ in lessons from schools with teacher leaders and those schools without teacher leaders.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Knowledge of Pedagogy</th>
<th>Pedagogical Control</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The teachers controlled and directed the flow of their lessons.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What examples were seen that typified this pedagogical control in practice?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The teachers asked all of the questions.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The teachers pre-determined what the answers were.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Learners were required to recall simple facts in response to questions.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• These facts were in the form of single words or short phrases.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The learners often answered in chorus.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social climate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The teachers created socially supportive interactive norms in their classrooms.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What examples were seen that typified these norms in practice?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The learners were active during lessons.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The learners enjoyed the activities.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learning contexts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teachers created learning contexts to help their learners acquire new knowledge.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What examples were seen that typified these contexts in practice?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The teachers taught things the learners already knew.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Knowledge was presented in the form of facts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Facts were connected to learners’ lives in a contrived manner.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The teachers spent very little time explaining these connections.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Knowledge of Content</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Form and substance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The teachers privileged the technical form of learning activities over the substance of what learners were meant to learn from them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What examples were seen that typified this privileging in practice?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Activities were randomly selected.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• There was little connection between activities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Learners sat in a group seating arrangement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• One learner in each group completed the activity while the others watched passively.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Authority and responsibility</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The teachers made a distinction between their authority for generating learning activities and their learners’ responsibility for completing these activities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What examples were seen that typified this distinction in practice?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Learners’ misunderstandings were left unchecked by the teachers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The teachers provided learners with little or no support to complete the learning activities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The teachers provided learners with little or no support during the report back sessions on learning activities.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concrete and abstract</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The teachers confused concrete and abstract knowledge.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What examples were seen that typified this confusion in practice?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The teachers did not explain how to complete abstract activities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The learners were unable to successfully complete abstract activities.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In order to compare the actual practice at Letjatji and Mashamba with that of the other four schools, a decision had to be made about which lesson transcripts should be used in order to reconstruct the teachers’ practices in relation to their knowledge as practice. Three particular lesson transcripts were chosen based on the extent to which they conformed to the pattern of practice established in Chapter Three. In other words, the lessons all began with question and answer introductions and they all contained at least one group learning activity. In addition, the three lessons selected all broadly dealt with a similar topic, namely the political divisions and leadership structures in the new South African government. These similarities help to focus the analysis that follows more directly on the extent to which the knowledge of pedagogy and knowledge of content demonstrated by the three teachers could be considered typical of the practice in the President’s Schools. One lesson is taken from Baropodi as a representative example of the knowledge as practice evident in the four schools without teacher leaders, and the other lessons are taken from Letjatji and Mashamba, the schools with the teacher leaders. None of these lessons have been used in earlier parts of this chapter.

KNOWLEDGE AS PRACTICE IN BAROPODI

The lesson selected for this analysis was taught at Baropodi on 16 February 1998. The teacher, MB, had taught at the school for her entire six-year career. She had attended the in-service programme held at Sacred Heart College (SHC), and as a member of Baropodi’s participatory community had been actively involved in the school-based support programme the project developed. MB named her lesson *The Political Divisions of South Africa* in the preparation file she made available during the lesson observation. She began her lesson thus:

Teacher: We have already taken fifteen minutes from the next period...so hurry...Today we will learn about where we live in the ‘Political Divisions of South Africa’. What will we learn?
Learners: Political divisions of South Africa.
Teacher: Get into your groups. Take two maps for each group. Each group has two different maps. One [map is] South Africa before 1994 and the other South Africa since 1994. Discuss the maps and write down things you think are the same or different. Write down only things which are the same now. Write your answers somewhere, maybe on the paper.

[The teacher gives ten minutes for this activity, during which time she sits at her desk marking exercise books. After ten minutes the teacher walks around the classroom once and speaks briefly to a group of learners.]

Are you taking part?

[She turns to a learner in the group.]

It seems as if you are doing this alone, Malo. Have you forgotten about these three [the other members of the group]?

[MB returns to her desk for another five minutes.]

Let’s have some feedback. What are the same? They are both [maps of] South Africa. What did you arrive at?

Learner 1: Namibia.
Teacher: What’s wrong with Namibia? We have Namibia on both. Namibia is not part of South Africa, it is a country on its own.

Learner 2: Free State and Natal.
Teacher: You say there are no similarities? Write down whether the new South Africa is having more provinces, are the provinces the same size? Write down the differences now.

[Another few minutes of silence.]

Teacher: We now know this. What other differences?

Learner 3: They are not equal.
Teacher: In what?

Learner 3: In provinces.
Teacher: Explain this in Northern Sotho [Sepedi].

[Learner 3 speaks in Sepedi for about a minute and the teacher translates into English.]

Teacher: You say, “One is before 1994, and one is after, when Nelson Mandela became President”. You don’t get the point! Name them! Do we have Transvaal in the new South Africa?

Learner 3: No.
Teacher: Yes we do! It is broken into other ones. What do we name them?

Learners: Gauteng, Northern Province [Limpopo], Mpumalanga, North West.
Teacher: We have four provinces now. Orange Free State, what is it now?

Learner 4: Free State
Teacher: What other differences? How many provinces? What is the Cape divided into now? Do we have Southern Cape?
Learners: No
Teacher: Other differences?
Learner 5: Gauteng
Teacher: What’s wrong with Gauteng? It’s part of Transvaal. OK, give me back my maps. We’ll continue tomorrow.

The analysis of teacher MB’s knowledge of practice begins by probing the pedagogical knowledge on which she drew to develop, and then to teach this lesson. It does this by concentrating on the form of pedagogical control evident in the lesson, the social climate MB established and the extent to which she created a suitable learning context for her learners to learn about the political divisions of South Africa.

The transcript shows that the teacher used questions to establish her pedagogical control over the lesson, and that she did this in much the same way as teachers in all of the schools had done. For example, she asked all of the questions and accepted several chorused answers. This could be seen when she asked, “What will we learn?” and accepted the chorused answer, “Political divisions of South Africa”; for “What do we name them?” she accepted the chorused list of, “Gauteng, Northern Province, Mpumalanga, North West”; and for “Do we have Southern Cape?” the only answer she wanted was the chorused, “No”. In addition, simple facts in the form of one-word answers or short sentences were all that was required to answer the kinds of questions that the teacher asked. This was apparent even when individual learners answered questions, as their answers were either single words like “Namibia” or “Gauteng”, or short sentences like “They are not equal”. It is also evident that the teacher had a pre-determined set of answers in mind when she asked her questions. Note, for example, MB’s frustration during the following exchange when she did not receive the answer she expected:
Teacher: You say, “One is before 1994, and one is after, when Nelson Mandela became President”. You don’t get the point! Name them! Do we have Transvaal in the new South Africa?

Learner 3: No.
Teacher: Yes we do! It is broken into other ones. What do we name them?

The teacher clearly wanted an answer relating to the number of provinces in South Africa after 1994, and she became very irritated when she did not receive that answer. This did not create a particularly warm social climate in her classroom as the atmosphere became rather tense at that moment. The teacher was agitated because, while she was aware that her learners did not “get the point”, she seemed unable to correct the problem. This suggests that at that point MB was not in a position to maintain a socially supportive environment in her classroom even though some of her learners could be considered active during the lesson.

The learning context that the MB created in this lesson did not lend itself to assisting her learners to learn anything new. All of the knowledge present in the lesson was in the form of facts and MB did not spend nearly enough time explaining what she meant by political divisions as she moved very quickly into the first of two learning activities. She provided no strategies for her learners to help them to acquire the facts they needed to complete the activities resulting in learning being constrained, as the learners either knew the names and number of provinces or they did not. In the interview that took place immediately after the lesson observation it became clear that MB generally moved too quickly between different concepts in her lessons:

\[LM:\text{ What will follow this lesson?}\]
\[MB:\text{ I will do premiers...cities...capitals...president.}\]

\[LM:\text{ What was this lesson’s outcome?}\]
\[MB:\text{ I was teaching how South Africa has changed (Lesson Discussion Interview, Baropodi School, MB, The Political Divisions of South Africa, 16 February 1998).}\]
Knowledge of content is the second element used to consider how typical MB's knowledge as practice was, and relates to how her practice was positioned in terms of form and substance, authority and responsibility, and, concrete and abstract. The teachers in Baropodi’s participatory community had gone to a lot of trouble to help MB create learning resources for this lesson as together they had hand-drawn a total of fourteen maps. However, in her use of these resources, MB, like many of her peers, privileged their form over their substance in terms of what she expected learners to learn from these resources. The lack of clear instructions provided by the teacher confused the learners who received very little guidance concerning exactly where their comparison of the maps should focus. Her only instructions for the first activity were:

Discuss the maps and write down things you think are the same or different. Write down only things which are the same now. Write your answers somewhere, maybe on the paper.

The conclusion that MB privileged form over substance was substantiated by what happened when she approached one group of learners. She said:

Are you taking part? It seems as if you are doing this alone, Malo. Have you forgotten about these three [the other members of the group]?

This is strongly suggestive of a classroom where learners were not used to talking to each other even though they were seated in a group arrangement. It is also suggestive of a group work activity that in reality was completed by only one member of the group while the others watched. It should be noted that six other teachers, including teachers in Letjatji and Mashamba, also told their learners to talk during lessons observed (see Section 4.1, Group Work, Appendix H).

The fact that MB gave no indication of what she meant in terms of “same or different”, and that she was very vague about where her learners should record their findings given that they were working in groups, are both strongly suggestive of MB privileging authority over responsibility. Even though the teacher asked about the “size” of the provinces, it appears that she wanted to
know how many provinces there were in South Africa in 1998 compared to the number before 1994. When the teacher asked, “Do we have Transvaal in the new South Africa?” learner 3 correctly answered “No”, as there is no new South African province with this name. However, the teacher disagreed and seemed to want to know the names of the new provinces that made up the geographical area of the original Transvaal province. The feedback she gave was confusing rather than helpful especially when she said, “We have four provinces now”. Presumably she meant that the area that used to be the Transvaal was now divided into four new provinces, but the lack of clarity in her statement confused the learners as they all knew that since 1994 South Africa had nine provinces. MB provided her learners with very little support and left them totally responsible for the activity and its outcome.

The learners’ confusion was intensified by the very nature of the maps created by teachers in Baropodi’s participatory community. The maps were not drawn to scale nor did they use similar conventions on both maps. In one of the post-1994 maps the country of Namibia looked like it was the tenth province of South Africa. This was due to the teacher not demarcating the international boundaries on this map in the same way as the pre-1994 map, where the international boundaries clearly reflected Namibia as a country independent of South Africa. The poor quality of the learning resources served to confuse the learners and render them unable to make any meaningful comparisons in terms of the political divisions of South Africa. The teacher did not provide any support to her learners as they completed these activities. In fact, she seemed to be unclear in her own mind about their purpose and this resulted in her being unable to refocus the learners when they did not do what she expected them to do. Essentially, the learners were unable to successfully complete the two activities because of this confusion.

In summary, the manner in which MB translated her understanding of OBE into the classroom revealed knowledge as practice that was just about identical to that summarised in the tool presented in Table 6.7 above. In terms of MB’s
knowledge of pedagogy, she tried to lead her learners towards the answers that she had established at the beginning of her lesson. She did develop what she thought were ‘group’ learning activities for her class, but then she provided very little real assistance for her learners to successfully address the requirements of the activities. The knowledge of content that she felt was legitimate for an OBE lesson caused her to focus on everyday, concrete facts that could be presented as right or wrong propositions about the number of provinces in South Africa.

KNOWLEDGE AS PRACTICE IN LETJATJI

The lesson selected to typify practice at Letjatji School was observed on 17 February 1998. It was named *The Provinces of South Africa* by the teacher, LM2, and had been prepared with the help of WK, Letjatji’s teacher leader. Teacher LM2 had not attended the in-service programme at SHC, but she had become a member of Letjatji’s participatory community once the teachers who had visited SHC creatively changed the composition of their original professional working group.

Teacher LM2 had drawn a large map of South Africa on the back of an out-of-date wall calendar. The map had a colour key to reflect each of the nine provinces. She placed this map on to the chalkboard for all her learners to see. In addition, she had several photocopies of a political map of South Africa taken from a school textbook where the provinces were outlined, but not labelled. She planned to use these resources during a group learning activity. Here is how LM2 began her lesson:

Teacher: Here are the words for the lesson - provinces, premier, smallest, biggest, boundary.

[The teacher writes these words on the chalkboard.]

All of you?

Learners: provinces…premier…smallest…biggest…boundary

Teacher: Again?

Learners: provinces…premier…smallest…biggest…boundary
Teacher: Good. This is a key.
[She points to the map on the chalkboard]
Each province has a key. What are their names? Yes?
Learner 1: Yellow, red, black, brown, orange....
[The teacher interrupts Learner 1]
Teacher: It is not orange...OK, next to the colour we have the name of a province. I'm going to read all the names, I'll call the colour. What colour is this? All of you?
Learners: Yellow.
Teacher: It represents Western Cape. We are going to use this key to identify different provinces on the map. This is a map of South African provinces. We have nine provinces. We are going to use the key to identify different provinces. Can you see the colour yellow on the map?
Learners: Yes
Teacher: We are going to look for the colour on the map, then write the names of the provinces. Number 1 is?
Learners: South Africa
Teacher: Number 1 is green and it represents?
Learners: Northern Province [Limpopo]
[This type of exchange continues until the learners chorused the names of all nine provinces. The teacher wrote the names of the provinces on the left hand side of the chalkboard as she did this.]
Teacher: Now we are going to colour our map and make a key. Do you have any crayons?
Learners: Yes
Teacher: Look at the key and colour it first. We are going to colour Western Cape with a yellow crayon.
[The teacher goes through each colour with the class. She gave them ten minutes to complete the activity. One learner in each 'group' completed the colouring while the other learners watched. Without making any comment on this activity, LM2 then explained the second group learning activity.]
Teacher: Who is the premier of our province?
Learner 1: Mr Magagane [the principal of the school].
Teacher: Mr Magagane is our premier?
Learners: No
Teacher: Mr Ramathlodi is the premier of the Northern Province [Limpopo]. Who is the premier of KwaZulu Natal?
[As these questions are answered, the teacher writes the names of the premiers next to the list of provinces that she had written on the chalkboard during the previous activity.]
Learner 2: Mr Ngubane
Teacher: Who is the premier of Western Cape?
Learner 3: Hernus Kriel
Teacher: Who is the premier of Eastern Cape?
Learner 4: Mhlaba
Teacher: Who is the premier of Free State?
Learner 5: Mrs Matsepe
Teacher: Who is the premier of Northern Cape?
Learner 6: Mr Dipico
Teacher: Who is the premier of North West?
Learner 7: Mr Molefe
Teacher: Who is the premier of Mpumalanga?
Learner 8: Phoza
Teacher: Who is the premier of Gauteng?
   [No one responds for a few minutes.]
   Anyone?
Learner 9: Mr Motshekgo
Teacher: Where did you get your information from?
Learner 9: A radio programme.
Teacher: Good boy! In your groups chose who will write these in your scribbler. I’m going to mix them up. Then you will write it correctly.
   [The teacher erases the names of the provinces and then re-writes them in a different order. She gives five minutes for the learners to write the list correctly.]
   Put away your books, we’ll continue tomorrow, maybe in the afternoon. Then we are going to write the provinces and abbreviate them. Abbreviation is to write something in short.

In terms of the knowledge of pedagogy implicit in LM2’s practice, an analysis of this lesson suggests that the issues of pedagogical control, social climate and learning context were evident in her practice in much the same way as they were evident in MB’s practice at Baropodi. For example, LM2 also used questions and answers to establish her pedagogical control. She asked all of the questions and frequently accepted chorused answers in the form of lists like, “provinces…premier…smallest…biggest…boundary” and single words like, “yellow” and “yes”. She used the phrase “all of you”, as a signal that her class should answer together in a chorus. Even when individual learners did answer questions, their responses were also lists like, “yellow, red, black, brown, orange”, or short phrases like, “Mr Magagane” and “a radio programme”. There were no extended conversational exchanges between the learners and the teacher during this particular lesson.
In terms of the social climate that characterised LM2’s practice, an extract from field notes taken during this lesson reflects the supportive role that Letjatji’s participatory community played in her practice:

Another teacher…comes into the lesson during her free period. She tells me that she wants to learn as much as she can and so watches other lessons whenever possible. The teacher [LM2] has no problem with an extra visitor. After all I am also there along with Willy [the teacher leader]!


In both MB’s lesson discussed earlier and this lesson, the social support that the teachers received from their participatory communities was clearly evident. However, both teachers found this kind of social support much more difficult to create and maintain inside their classrooms even though they did attempt to involve their learners more actively in the lessons.

In terms of creating a learning context, the lesson was developed around facts that some of the learners already knew, and for those learners who did not know the names of the provinces and/or premiers, no strategies were provided to help them acquire that knowledge; they either knew the answers or they did not. In the lesson observation interview held immediately after this lesson, LM2 was asked to give her reasons for teaching this particular lesson. She said:

The learners live in South Africa…they must be kept up dated with the present situation (Lesson Discussion Interview, Letjatji School, *The Provinces of South Africa*, 17 February 1998).

This implies that the teacher tried to create a relevant context but that she did it by manipulating discrete facts that had, at best, a tenuous link with her learners’ lives.

The knowledge of content evident in LM2’s practice was also very similar to that in MB’s knowledge as practice at Baropodi. This conclusion is most clearly seen in the two group learning activities that LM2 developed for her class. The first
activity required learners to colour the nine South African provinces on the photocopied maps and to construct a colour-coded key with their names. The second activity required learners to match the names of the nine premiers on the board with the correct provinces. These two activities did not relate to each other in any meaningful way, nor did the teacher refer back to the first activity when she introduced the second. This is indicative of the teacher privileging the form of the learning activities over their substance. The manner in which the teacher organised what she believed to be group learning activities revealed a confusing contradiction as, even given the scarcity of resources in rural schools, each learner did have his or her own notebook. There was no reason why the second activity had to be completed in a group as all learners could have recorded the names written on the chalkboard in their own notebooks. A possible explanation could be that in the teacher's understanding of OBE, group work was the 'only' method and that it was reasonable for one learner to record a group’s answers. Given that only one learner in each ‘group’ completed the colouring activity and then recorded the names of provinces and premiers, it could be said that LM2’s knowledge as practice at this point focused on the orthodoxy of one technique that bore a striking resemblance to fundamental pedagogics rather than to collaborative learning. All of these issues created the illusion of a learner-centred lesson, which in reality, was characterised by inappropriate group work.

The teacher asked one or two questions about discrete facts at the start of her lesson and then moved quickly to give instructions about constructing a key to the map of South Africa in order to identify the provinces. LM2 did not discuss the concept of a key with her learners and she provided little support to enable them to do this on their own. At a superficial level, constructing and then colouring in a key may seem to be a simple task, but the function of a key was never discussed with the learners, reducing the activity to a technical task completed by one learner in each group. Similarly, the concept of a premier and the responsibilities attached to that office were neither explained nor discussed before the teacher asked the class to list their names. These issues indicate
that, like her colleague MB, LM2 privileged her authority in the lesson to develop activities, and that there was a great deal of confusion between the concrete and abstract knowledge embedded in the group learning activities.

In conclusion, the knowledge as practice that LM2 drew on in this lesson was very similar to that drawn on by MB in Baropodi, and indeed to that of her peers in other schools. LM2 based all of her pedagogical and content decisions on a repertoire of practices where knowledge was considered to be a series of facts and where a form of group work was viewed as the only technique appropriate in an OBE lesson. The orthodoxy of what she described as a ‘group work’ teaching method was also apparent in the lesson interview:

\[
\text{LM: Why did you do the activities as group activities?} \\
\text{LM2: The children can help each other and especially they can help the slower learners. The children rotate the roles they fill. (Lesson Discussion Interview, Letjatji School, The Provinces of South Africa, 17 February 1998)}
\]

It seems as if the actions of Letjatji’s teacher leader, WK, were focused on supporting the same knowledge as practice in which the participatory communities in the other schools were focused on implementing.

**KNOWLEDGE AS PRACTICE IN MASHAMBA**

The lesson selected to typify the practice at Mashamba was named \textit{Leadership and Civics} and was taught by TM1, a young male teacher with only three years experience. His lesson was observed and videotaped on 16 October 1998. TM1 had attended the in-service programme at SHC and was particularly active in the participatory community at his school under the leadership of SM3. He began his lesson by introducing the learners to some vocabulary that he thought would help them in the lesson. After about five minutes of a home language monologue, the teacher had written the following on the chalkboard in English:
Leadership (lead) guide
Village chief
Ward 7 from Riverplaats, a combination of villages, a councillor
province like Northern Province, premier, and a MEC
TLC transitional local council, mayor
National (nation) president, deputy president ministers

TM1 then continued the rest of his lesson in English:

Teacher: Wherever there are people, there should be a leader.
Wherever there are people, there should be a leader. In a church, the leader of the church is a pastor or minister.
Now, what about the leader of the class? Who is the leader of the class?
Learner 1: Mr Mukwevho.
Teacher: I don't want the name, I want the title. I know Mr Mukwevho is the leader of the class, but I want his status.
Learner 1: Teacher.
Teacher: The leader of the class is a teacher. But what about the leader of the whole school?
Learner 2: The principal.
Teacher: Yes, the principal. Now we are going to do leadership like in our village. Who can give me an example of a village that he or she thinks about? Why don't you raise up your hand?
Learner 3: Mashamba
[This is the name of the village as well as the name of the school.]
Teacher: Mashamba! Now who is the leader of that village?
Learner 3: Mr Mashamba.
Teacher: But which Mr Mashamba? We don't know who you mean.
Learner 3: Mr Mashamba TH.
Teacher: Now in the village, that person, do we refer to that person as a teacher? What is the status of Mr Mashamba TH?
Learner 3: The leader of the village is the chief.
Teacher: In other words, the name of a leader of the village is the chief. Now we also have our ward, as I have indicated, from Riverplaats. The ward. It is composed of many villages and is controlled by a councillor. Our ward is Ward 7, now who is the councillor of this ward? Maybe, you need a clue? This person is the principal of a particular school. You see him every day and every afternoon.
Learner 4: The leader of the ward is called a councillor.
Teacher: These councillors all have a leader. Who can tell me the name of the leader of our TLC [Transitional Local Council]? Or any TLC? It is not a principal, a teacher or a councillor.
Learner 5: The president.
Teacher: President, that is a good try, but it is not right. Don’t say the name, only the title.
Learner 6: Premier
Teacher: No, not premier.
Learner 7: Chief
Teacher: But we said the chief is the leader of the village. He can’t be the leader of the TLC as well. Let me help you, the leader of the TLC is the mayor, and in our TLC his name is Mr... The province also has its own leader. Who is the leader of the province?
Learner 8: President
Teacher: Not the president.
Learner 9: Premier
Teacher: So we know the name of the premier of your province. What is his name?
Learner 9: Mr Ramathlodi.
Teacher: This premier has people next to him who help him...the office of the premier. And these people are also the leaders of the various [governmental] departments, like Legal or Education. And these people, we call them MEC [Member of Executive Council]. What is it in full? We always hear it on the radio.
Learner 10: Mayor of...
Teacher: No
Learner 11: Member of...
Teacher: Yes, who can help her?
Learner 12: Member of...
Teacher: Do you want to try again?
Learner 12: Member of Examination Council.
Teacher: Mostly right. But not examination.
Learner 13: Member of the Executive Council.
Teacher: So, we are not going to deal with all the departments in our province. Only three departments, where you are able to name the leaders. What about your department, the so-called Education. Who is the MEC for Education?
Learner 14: Bengu
Teacher: No, he is the [National] Minister of Education. But our MEC?
Learner 15: Northern Province [Limpopo].
Teacher: No, it is Joe Paahla. We also have another department, the Department of Agriculture, where the MEC for our province is Mr Farsani. Now after school, go and ask your brothers and sisters about different MECs and departments in our province. What is the leader of our nation?
Learner 16: Paahla
Teacher: No, he is our premier. We don’t need the name, we need the position.
Learner 17: President.
Teacher: Now who is the president of our nation?
Learner 18: Mr Mandela
Teacher: Now this person has people in his office next to him, like the deputy president. And I believe we all know his name, our deputy president?
Learner 19: Thabo Mbeki
Teacher: Now there are ministers who work with them. With the president and deputy president. There are a lot of them, but I am only going to concentrate on three departments. Like, education, who is the leader in that department, national. Minister of Education? You will all know when you hear.
Learner 20: Mr Bengu
Teacher: Yes, Mr Bengu. And we also have another department, the Department of Sport. Let me not waste your time, his name is Steve Tshwete. And now Justice, who is the Minister of Justice. Dullah Omar. Now I want you in your groups to name the nine provinces of South Africa and the premiers. You have five minutes. When you are through, complete this worksheet in groups.

[The worksheet used in this activity is attached in the figure below.]
In terms of establishing pedagogical control at the beginning of a lesson, TM1’s lesson conformed to the knowledge as practice observed in the two lessons analysed above with only one or two slight descriptive differences. Once again,
the teacher was the only person who asked questions during the lesson, and the questions he asked only needed very short answers. For the majority of answers, single words like, “teacher” and “Mashamba” were all that was necessary to answer the direct recall questions characteristic of his lesson. This was even though individual learners answered all the questions, as there were no chorused responses evident in this lesson. Unlike the other two lessons, there was a moment when learners answered in a more extended manner, for example: “The leader of the village is the chief” (Learner 3); and, “The leader of the ward is called the councillor” (Learner 4). However, these answers were also in response to direct recall questions and could indicate more about the English competencies of these two learners rather than serve to indicate differences in TM1’s pedagogical control during the lesson. Like his peers, TM1 had predetermined the kinds of answers he expected to receive to his questions. This proved to be a point of confusion to the learners, as even though TM1 asked “Who is the leader of that village?” he did not seem to want the actual name of the person, but rather the title, “chief”.

In a slightly different manner to his peers at Baropodi and Letjatji, TM1 did manage not only to create a socially supportive environment, but also to maintain it throughout the lesson by making encouraging comments when the learners did not know the answers to his questions. For example at different points in the lesson he said: “Maybe, you need a clue?”; “That is a good try, but it is not right”; “Let me help you…”; “Yes, who can help her?”; “Do you want to try again?”; and, “Mostly right”. TM1 did try to shift the social climate in his class through these supportive comments, but this still did not lead his learners to acquire new knowledge as the focus of his lesson remained on lists of names and titles that the learners either knew or did not know.

Some time later I returned to Mashamba and discussed videotaped parts of the lesson with TM1. This revealed details about how TM1 tried to create a learning context through making connections between his lesson and his learners’ lives:
TM1: I think they [the learners] already knew the family leaders. Like the father, according to our Venda tradition. Aunts are also leaders in our families, the sisters of my father. Nothing can be done in the family without the knowledge of the aunts. They probably also knew some people in authority, but they didn't know the new country’s institutional leaders. They are only three years old!

LM: What was the broad aim of your lesson? You know, when you introduced the concept of leadership, what did you want them to learn, to achieve?

TM1: I wanted them to learn to know that there are different people who can be regarded as leaders in the different institutions. Also, those things are going to help them in their future lives. By the age of sixteen or seventeen, they will have identity books, and later they will make elections, you know, vote. He or she must be able to identify leaders in these institutions. I was giving them the background they will need in the future (Video Discussion, Mashamba School, TM1, Leadership and Civics, 23 November 1999).

The learning context he created was focused on identifying leaders and not on probing the concept of leadership. This confined the learning context to the recall of facts that were connected to the learners’ lives in the village of Mashamba in a very contrived manner. When the opportunity presented itself for TM1 to make what could be considered more relevant links between leadership and the lives of the learners, he was unable to do so. For example, TM1 could have discussed the responsibilities of teachers and principals as they were mentioned during the lesson as examples of leaders. This discussion could have extended the learning context TM1 created to lead on to the more unfamiliar leadership roles like premiers and ministers.

The two group learning activities in this lesson also demonstrated knowledge of content very similar to that evident in the previous two lessons. To complete the first activity, the learners had to compile a list of the nine provinces and the nine premiers. It is interesting to note that this activity bore no relation to the discussions that had taken place during the lesson introduction, once again, the learners would either know the names of the provinces and their premiers or they would not. The teacher had not developed any strategy to assist learners with this activity; possibly he assumed that they already had acquired this
everyday knowledge. The problems that existed with how TM1 connected learning activities to the lesson discussion, seems to suggest that he privileged the form of the activities over their substance. The conclusion could also be drawn that TM1 made a distinction between authority and responsibility when he neglected to provide his learners with the support they needed to meet the demands of the activities.

In the second activity (see Figure 6.9 above) the first question was a repetition of the previous activity, while the other questions required learners to recall facts that the teacher had given them during the introduction. If the learners had been inattentive during the introduction, or if they had not understood that introduction due to their emerging English skills, they would not have been in a position to complete these activities that relied on the recall of abstract concepts. This is suggestive of confusion in the lesson between concrete knowledge and abstract knowledge.

The teaching method that the teacher named ‘group work’ was very similar to that used in all of the lessons observed and discussed in this chapter. Neither of the activities actually lent themselves to collaboration, and indeed only one learner in each group completed them while the others watched passively. There was neither the opportunity nor the need for more than one learner to complete the activities; substantiating the earlier conclusion that form was privileged over substance.

TM1’s understanding of knowledge as practice was very similar to LM2’s, and indeed to MB’s. He positioned himself authoritatively and developed group learning activities that involved the manipulation and recall of simple facts. TM1 made the following comment during a focus group interview held at Mashamba that reinforced his authority and his learners’ responsibilities:
The advantage [of OBE] is that I act as a facilitator or guide who helps learners. Of which most of the work is done by the learners themselves. It encourages learners to think for themselves that is to be creative. It helps learners to practise responsibility and sharing ideas with others. It makes learners to be good listeners and analytical....Group work helps pupils accept responsibility and make decisions (Focus Group Interview Number 1, Mashamba School, TM1, 27 May 1998).

In conclusion, planning lessons around collaborative learning activities that engage learners in meaningful interactions where form and substance, authority and responsibility, and, concrete and abstract knowledge are equally and appropriately addressed, are complex tasks. Teachers are also required to maintain meaningful pedagogical control within a supportive learning environment where a learning context is established that neither constrains nor compromises learning. All of these tasks require extensive physical and human resources in order for teachers to become competent in their execution. The lack of access the teachers in the project had to physical resources required them to base all their decisions relating to pedagogy and content on discussions they had with each other in their participatory communities. This resulted in ad hoc selections of activities that resembled an ‘anything goes’ type of curriculum. This is far removed from Cornbleth’s (1990) belief that for a curriculum to be considered emancipatory, much like OBE claims to be in the South African context, it must develop critical consciousness in both teachers and learners. While it does seem that all of the participatory communities were able to provide social support to the teachers, and that those communities with the teacher leaders were able to create additional intellectual space for discussions about practice, none of the participatory communities were able to supply the kind of support that was required to help teachers understand OBE in such a way that they could plan and teach intellectually rigorous lessons.
CONCLUSION

Throughout this thesis the concept of teacher collaboration in participatory communities has been presented as a strategy that held the potential of enhancing teaching and learning in the President’s Schools. Intertwined with this assumption was the perception that when this collaboration was enhanced by the actions of school-based teacher leaders, then a further condition was in place to support meaningful improvements in the teaching practice in two of the project schools. This chapter looked in depth at the classroom practice that did emerge out of the collaborative participatory communities in order to ascertain the extent to which these assumptions proved to be accurate in the President’s Schools.

The analysis of lessons presented at the beginning of this chapter identified six elements that constituted the teachers’ knowledge as practice in the President’s Schools. It also showed that these elements provided evidence about the teachers’ knowledge of pedagogy and knowledge of content. Even though this process illustrated the complex nature of the practice that the teachers forged together in their participatory communities, it also raised many questions about the intellectual rigour of the lessons that came to characterise their knowledge as practice. Conclusions were drawn about the extent to which participatory communities privileged knowledge of pedagogy over knowledge of content, resulting in what Taylor (1999) would call an “unorganised confusion of contrived reality” (p. 121), given that pedagogy impacted on classroom practice in the project like a “content-free skill” (Shulman, 1986, p.8).

Teachers’ knowledge as practice was summarised in an analytical tool that was used to compare practices between schools with teacher leaders and schools without teacher leaders. This comparison revealed that little substantial differences existed between these practices; the conclusion was drawn that the actions of the teacher leaders served to reinforce the same knowledge as
practice as that which was entrenched in the other four participatory communities. Further research is needed to see if this would change over time.

These deceptively simplistic-looking lessons, reminiscent of lessons influenced by the apartheid ideologies of teaching and learning, showed how difficult it was to breach the practices associated with fundamental pedagogics. The teachers unknowingly reproduced past practices under the guise of OBE. The conclusion can also be made that, in the context of the President's Schools, the form of teacher collaboration that emerged, while providing teachers with a sense of dignity and pride, and containing elements of professional learning in communities, was not yet able to support improvements in actual teaching practices.