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The challenges of curriculum change challenges of curriculum change teachers in Limpopo province

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2006-11-17T09:07:08Z
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CHAPTER 4

TAKING-UP TEACHER COLLABORATION: THE EMERGENCE OF A NEW SOCIAL PRACTICE

> Without the normative climate provided by a school professional community, making major pedagogical change is possible but very difficult (Louis *et al*, 1996, pp. 180-181).

The next three chapters in this thesis are framed by the dimensions of discourse that are part of Fairclough's (1991) theory of critical language study, namely social practice, discursive practice and actual practice. Drawing on this theory assists in presenting an integrated explanation for what happened during the implementation of outcomes-based education (OBE) in the President's Schools Project. This integrated explanation accounts for the impact that both the macro practices of society and the micro practices of the project had on establishing and maintaining new discourses practices in the lives of these teachers; and by so doing this makes the relationship between the three dimensions of teachers' discourse explicit.

In order to understand the discursive practices of the teachers and the extent to which these discourses changed, maintained or resisted the new OBE practices in the schools, it is necessary to first understand the complex and invisible relationships that constituted teacher collaboration as a new social practice in the project schools. This chapter explains how and why a particular group of Intermediate Phase teachers creatively and actively 'took up'[1] collaboration as a new social practice in their schools. It does this by providing background details about the manner in which the project planned to initiate these teachers into OBE. Comments are made about the determining and/or determinative effects

[1] This is based on the concept of "take-up" (Adler, 2002, p. 9) that is used to capture what can happen when teachers participate in in-service professional development programmes.

that different levels of social organisation had on these teacher development plans, and on the manner in which the teachers reacted to them.

Interview data indexed at two of the research categories established and substantiated in Chapter Three, namely teacher collaboration in participatory communities and curriculum creativity, are quoted from extensively in this chapter.

THE NATURE OF THE PROJECT:
Determined by social processes

In order to fully understand why teacher collaboration emerged in the President's Schools, the social processes existing at societal and institutional levels of social organisation need to be understood in terms of the effect they had on how the project was first conceptualised and then implemented. Three social processes operating at a societal level had a determining effect on the nature of the President's Schools Project, namely the needs of the funders, the needs of Limpopo province and the curriculum policy agenda in South Africa at that time. While these processes were briefly mentioned in Chapter One, they need to be expanded on in relation to Fairclough's (1991) dimension of social practice and his stage of explanation in his model of critical discourse analysis.

The arrival of international funders in the South African educational context, soon after the country's first democratic election in 1994, impacted on the formulation of the project as a social practice. In particular, the interests of the Flemish government, who eventually funded this project, determined that both pre-service and in-service teacher development activities were addressed in the business plan. The practice of the Flemish government to supply technical support to projects in the form of Flemish consultants in turn determined that these two activities were kept separate in terms of locality and implementing agency. These processes resulted in the project's business plan catering for two

distinctly separate sub-projects, namely: pre-service activities in a teacher education college in Polokwane (Limpopo's capital city) implemented by Flemish consultants; and whole school development (WSD) in-service activities in the President's Schools implemented by Sacred Heart College Research and Development (SHC R&D). The business plan defined the two sub-projects thus:

> Component One
> Assistance with teacher upgrading in Mathematics, Science and Technology and the development of Technical and Technicon education in the province.
>
> Component Two
> The President's Schools Project…SHC R&D will work closely with the six Presidential Schools, focusing on whole school development, administration and finance training, and curriculum development in those schools. (Sacred Heart College Research and Development, 1996, pp. 3-4)

The WSD activities that made up the second component of the Flemish project targeted two particular groups in schools: school managers and governors were targeted in order to transform the manner in which the President's Schools were run from an organisational perspective; and forming the basis of this thesis, Intermediate Phase teachers (Grade 4 to Grade 6) were targeted in order to improve teaching practice in the six schools through the implementation of OBE.

The second determining social process that impacted on the project as a social practice related to the particular needs of the rural Limpopo province of South Africa. These needs dictated where the WSD component of the project would be located, and the schools that were selected for support and development. These decisions were made by the then Minister of the Executive Council (MEC) for Education in Limpopo Province, Minister Aaron Motsoaledi, and resulted in the selection of six particular primary schools, namely Baropodi, Khomisani, Letjatji, Mashamba, Mutshetshe and Nwaxinyamani.

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Third, the climate of tension and contradiction dominating the policy discourse at that time provided a particular framework for change that also played a determining role in forming the project as a social practice. In particular the curriculum policy's focus on "transformational OBE" (Department of Education, 1997b, p. 7) to a large extent determined that the curriculum component of the project should focus on what was then the newly conceptualised OBE policy. The broad scope of the professional development activities that were aimed at helping the teachers to implement OBE in their classrooms was described in the project's business plan:

> In-service training at SHC
> During the first half of the year, teachers from the President's Schools will visit SHC to follow a three-day programme of teacher development:
> - Observe SHC classes in action,
> - Prepare their own lessons and write materials for the lessons,
> - Be videotaped while teaching a class,
> - Review own performance,
> - Plan a theme, and
> - Observe and participate in any other activities at SHC.
>
> Support on site at President's Schools
> The Unit will have one main co-ordinator and one trainer. The trainer will visit each of the six schools on a regular basis to support the teachers while implementing the integrated approach to teaching in their own classrooms. (Sacred Heart College Research and Development, 1996, p. 10)

In this project, I was the curriculum co-ordinator and my colleague, Sydwell Marhule, was the curriculum trainer. It is important to note that both of us had taught for several years at Sacred Heart College (SHC) before joining the research and development team that was to implement the President's Schools Project. Given this history, the teacher development activities that we formulated within the business plan's framework were strongly influenced by social processes operating at the institutional level of SHC. These processes were detailed in Chapter One, which showed the active and central role that teachers played in planning and developing an innovative curriculum designed to directly address learners' needs within a framework of empowerment and social justice.

It was these particular traditions of curriculum change that led the project field workers to make three assumptions that impacted on determining the nature of the project. First, it was assumed that those SHC teachers who had experienced curriculum developments in the 1980s and 1990s would be well placed to help other teachers develop the curriculum for their schools. Second, it was assumed that there was a great deal of similarity between the Integrated Studies (IS) curriculum at SHC and OBE, thus implying that SHC would be a suitable context in which to locate teacher development activities. Fleisch (2002) also located the hybrid OBE curriculum framework partly within an integrated studies tradition. Third, it was assumed that teachers in the six schools were equally well positioned to participate meaningfully in school-based curriculum development activities that would improve their classroom practice. All of these processes determined the actual form that teacher development programmes took in the project, namely the in-service programme and the school-based support programme.

THE IN-SERVICE PROGRAMME

The in-service teacher development programme was designed as an initiation activity, which once underway would be replaced by the school-support programme that was planned to include curriculum workshops and materials development activities. At this early stage in the project, teacher collaboration was not included as one of the project's proposed development strategies.

A three-day cycle of in-service visits to SHC in Johannesburg began early in 1997 and introduced teachers from the President's Schools' to the curriculum component of the project. The aim of this in-service programme was for teachers from Limpopo to observe what the project perceived to be a successful form of OBE in practice, namely SHC's IS curriculum. The in-service programme was cyclic in terms of the project as the process was repeated

several times during 1997 with different groups of Intermediate Phase teachers. Each group, made up of between ten to twelve people from a combination of at least two of the six schools, participated only once in the in-service programme at SHC.

During the in-service programme, each visiting teacher was paired with a teacher from SHC who taught the same Intermediate Phase grade. These two teachers worked closely together during the school day through lesson observations, lesson demonstrations and discussions of practice. In the afternoon, the visiting teachers worked with the curriculum co-ordinator to reflect on what they had seen, and to discuss the application of IS principles to the implementation of OBE in their classrooms. These initial teacher development activities were located in the context of classroom practice at SHC, thus foregrounding SHC and the practice of its teachers as the appropriate learning context from which these rural teachers could be launched into the new curriculum. During several interviews, different teachers in each of the schools reflected positively on their in-service experiences at SHC. For example:

> We got motivation from the people at Sacred Heart (Focus Group Interview Number 2, Baropodi School, EM2, 13 May 1998).
>
> I feel that the curriculum is mine because through the support of Sacred Heart College I gain a lot. And I'm urging SHC for more support. (Focus Group Interview Number 2, Khomisani School, WM1, 3 August 1998)
>
> The driving force was SHC. You know the first group that visited SHC came back and said, "Let's start now." But all the group [the other Intermediate Phase teachers who had not yet participated in the in-service programme at SHC] didn't know what was happening over there [at SHC], and they felt threatened. Then there came a second group, until the last group. And now everyone knew what we were expected to do. (Focus Group Number 2, Letjatji School, JM1, 12 May 1998)
>
> But now that they [Intermediate Phase teachers from Letjatji] have been to Sacred Heart, they are very keen to start [implementing the new curriculum]. (Leadership Interview, Letjatji School, WK, 31 August 1998)
>
> When I first heard about OBE I was uncertain and I felt insecure. But our workshops at Sacred Heart helped a lot. We could see, "Oh yes! This is

> our direction!" We knew where to start! (Focus Group Interview Number 1, Mashamba School, AM, 27 May 1998)
>
> We just heard of OBE some time ago. Then there was the coming of Lorraine and Sydwell. We went to Sacred Heart and observed. But the three people who went [to SHC for the first in-service programme organised for Mashamba teachers], they were no longer interested in teaching the way they had in the past. We were naive in the past and not fair to our learners. Then we emulated what we saw [during the in-service programme]. We sat and tried to plan together, it was satisfying. (Focus Group Interview Number 2, Mashamba School, EM4, 27 May 1998)
>
> MN: Sacred Heart College invited us to visit their college. During the visit we attend the different classes and see how the teachers teach their learners….They [SHC teachers] also gave us the [curriculum] materials which we, which we, will use when we prepare our own work. They [Lorraine and Sydwell] also help us with the workshop at SHC after we had attended the different classes….
> ET: Only when we visited SHC and observed, did we like it. I would thank SHC for its effort to push the government to be positive. (Focus Group Interview Number 2, Mutshetshe School, 4 August 1998)
>
> We are allowed to attend SHC workshops (Focus Group Interview Number 2, Nwaxinyamani School, MM1, 28 May 1998).

A learner-centred approach to teacher development was used during the in-service programme that linked SHC's focus on transformation and social justice to OBE's framework of "empowerment" and "life-long learning" (Department of Education, 1997a, p. 5 and p. 8 respectively). In line with this methodology discussions were held during each in-service programme concerning the next implementation step that the project should take in order to assist the teachers once they had returned to their own schools. The teachers suggested a variety of ideas for the intensive school-based support programme to which the project committed its resources. In particular the teachers asked for assistance with the following issues: the implementation of OBE in the context of schools with limited material and financial resources; the adaptation of the school time table to meet the requirements of the eight new OBE learning areas; the implementation of continuous assessment strategies; the integration of content and method across

the curriculum; the skills to implement group work in the classroom; and processes to stimulate community involvement and participation in curriculum issues (Sacred Heart College Research and Development, 1997a). By including this learner-centred activity in its practices, the project made three assumptions about teachers and teaching. First, it assumed that the teachers, with their lived experiences of working in rural schools, were in a position to make meaningful suggestions regarding the content necessary for the school-based support programme. Second, it was also assumed that the curriculum co-ordinator and trainer would be able to develop equally meaningful strategies to successfully address these issues in the six schools. Third, it was assumed that the manner in which the content of these teacher development activities was made available to the teachers would lead to improved teaching practices in the President's Schools. This thesis graphically illustrates how inaccurate these assumptions proved to be.

THE SCHOOL-BASED SUPPORT PROGRAMME

In the "detailed and snarled process" (Fullan and Stiegelbauer, 1991, p. 48) of educational change, the school-based support programme marked the start of a new teacher development phase in the project. This phase could be compared to the implementation phase as theorised by Berman and McLaughlin (1978), Fullan and Stiegelbauer (*ibid*), and Huberman and Miles (1984). During this implementation phase the teachers experienced early attempts at actually putting the new curriculum into practice. The quotes below from each school document teachers' perceptions of the school-based support programme in relation to their early experiences of teaching what they considered to be OBE lessons:

> It is difficult to change, but we try with support from the project. Now we know what OBE is all about….We had in-school support to help us. We thought OBE was something good! (Focus Group Interview Number 1, Baropodi School, SM2, 13 May 1998)

> Sydwell came to our school and conducted workshops and showed us how to plan a unit of work. From the unit, you plan smaller lessons. He also taught lessons while teachers observed. From there, we tried to implement. He also did class visits. (Focus Group Interview Number 2, Khomisani School, EB1, 3 August 1998)
>
> And then the in-school support from Sydwell, he gave us trust that what we were doing was right. And then we organised ourselves to form groups. So that we can work together and share ideas. Then we started to prepare OBE lessons. After observing our lessons, we sat down and discussed them with him. He gave guidance where necessary. He showed us our weaknesses and strong points....Sydwell came, we thought he would show us how to start, he just said, "Start." It was a challenge! (Focus Group Interview Number 2, Letjatji School, JM1, 12 May 1998)
>
> We would not be where we are today without Sacred Heart. Sydwell came, Lorraine came. They helped us change the method of teaching, the new terminologies….They encouraged us and we really felt that now we should start. You were there to help us. (Pair Interview, Letjatji School, JM1, 26 October 1998)
>
> Sydwell came to observe and we found that this thing [OBE] can work (Focus Group Interview Number 2, Mashamba School, EM3, 27 May 1998).
>
> They [the project] also help us with the in-school support (Focus Group Interview Number 2, Mutshetshe School, MN, 4 August 1998).
>
> Schools need quite a bit of support [when implementing OBE]. You need three months continuous workshops, at least one, twice a quarter. (Focus Group Interview Number 1, Nwaxinyamani School, AN1, 28 May 1998)

During the school-based support programme, the curriculum trainer found that certain practical constraints interfered with his ability to develop a successful plan to address the curriculum issues suggested by the teachers during the in-service programme. In particular the distances between the six schools in Limpopo meant that each school could rely on the project's direct support only once every six weeks. To address this problem he established teacher teams that could meet in his absence to sustain interest in the project and in curriculum change more generally. He reported that, "SHC R&D believes that such a group

structure facilitates a quicker process of transforming classroom practices" (Sacred Heart College Research and Development, 1997a, p. 27). The establishment of these teacher teams was meant to be a short-term practical solution to the problem of the project's absence from the schools for weeks at a time. These teams were meant to optimise the project's support time in the schools so that the curriculum trainer's attention could be on observing teachers' lessons, on reflecting about these lessons together through critical discussions of practice, and on facilitating relevant curriculum workshops; rather than his attention being confined to planning simple lessons with teachers in a context outside of their classrooms.

The teams of teachers in each school were named 'professional working groups' by the project and were composed of Intermediate Phase teachers who attended the in-service programme at SHC in Johannesburg. As such, all Foundation and Senior Phase teachers, as well as any Intermediate Phase teacher who had not yet attended the in-service programme, were excluded from these groups. Three exemplar quotes are provided, which typify the establishment of professional working groups in the project and the manner in which the teachers began to speak of them:

> PM1: ...we are part of so-called 'professional groups' so we make preparation together....We work together, we discuss and plan together as a group, approve of the work together. It even motivates group work from the teachers….
>
> PL: You know, in our professional groups, when we prepare, we use resources. We guide each other, what type of resources to use. We can also create our own resources….
>
> PM1: As professional working groups we [are] used to observe [observing] each other. It's not like before when the principal came to observe, to correct you. But nowadays, in our groups, two or three observe us teach and correct each other politely, to guide. And after observing, we come together to tackle some of the problems. That is very much important, that is what motivates us….To solve a problem, we look [at] the cause of the problem and try to tackle that, not the person. (Focus Group Interview Number 1, Letjatji School, 12 May 1998)

UNISA

> There is no top-down management [in the professional working groups]. Teachers work alone in professional groups, they assemble in the staff room and they do their work willingly together. Prepare their lessons, there is no principal telling them. All are dedicated to their teaching. (Focus Group Interview Number 2, Letjatji School, JM1, 12 May 1998)
>
> We [the professional working group] meet in our own time. No time is organised during the school day. We try to solve problems together as teachers. All teachers want to be part of the working groups. (Focus Group Interview Number 2, Nwaxinyamani School, MM1, 28 May 1998)

The project provided an organisational structure that enabled groups of teachers to come together, to talk about their work, to learn from one another, and to address curriculum issues collaboratively. Through this activity the teachers began to experience their schools as places where they spoke to each other about teaching and learning. The establishment of these teacher teams was not meant to become the central development activity for the teachers, nor was it meant to create an illusion of success concerning OBE, but as the rest of this thesis shows, this is indeed what happened.

In retrospect the strategy of teacher collaboration was underpinned by particular theoretical positions on teacher learning. Many theorists suggest that collaboration has the potential to lead to improvements in classroom teaching. For example, and as was reviewed in Chapter Two, Louis *et al* (1996) argue that the "deprivatisation of practice" (p. 182) is a key element for teachers to be well positioned to implement meaningful pedagogical change. In addition, Ball and Cohen (1999) argue that teachers learn about new versions of teaching and learning, and come to understand practice differently, if they intervene in the "isolation of practice" (p. 15). Also one of Cochran-Smith and Lytle's (1999) conceptions of teacher-learning, namely "knowledge-*in*-practice" (p. 262), shares some congruency with teacher collaboration in that both suggest that teachers learn together through reflection and inquiry into and on practice, and that this enhances their understanding of their own actions in the classroom. Based on these theoretical positions, and on the quotes above that describe some of the professional working groups' activities, it was a reasonable assumption for the

project to make at that time that the professional working groups as a development strategy had the potential for creating the conditions under which the teachers could understand more about their own practice. It was also assumed that teachers would then be better positioned to successfully implement OBE in their classrooms and to deliver a curriculum of intellectual quality to their learners.

In conclusion, social processes operating at societal and institutional levels determined the nature of the project and the structure of the teacher development activities that were planned for teachers. However, shortly after the teachers began to interact with the project and its activities at a situational level they began to effect their own changes on the project as a social practice. These changes were evident through the manner in which the teachers responded to the development activities of the in-service programme and the school-based support programme. The outcome of these changes was the entrenchment of a particular form of teacher collaboration in the six project schools, a practice that had a determinative effect on other social processes in the six schools.

TAKING-UP TEACHER COLLABORATION:
Determinative of social processes

McLaughlin (1987), in documenting several lessons learnt from the field of policy implementation, emphasises that for policy to be successfully implemented, the capacity and will of the people expected to implement that policy are critical factors. There can be little doubt that the teachers in the President's Schools Project exerted their will through taking-up teacher collaboration as the central strategy for curriculum change. Teachers became actively immersed in the process of curriculum change through their shared work. Extracts from a variety of interviews in each school illustrate how positively this strategy began to

dominate the teachers' interests and energies as they began to experience a real sense of enjoyment and accomplishment in their teaching:

> We talk about it [curriculum change] in the shebeen [local bar] [laughter]! On Sundays we say, "Outcomes-based education is all right!" (Focus Group Interview Number 1, Baropodi School, SN1, 13 May 1998)

> SN3: But it promotes harmony by working together. We don't need to work alone. It is easier for a teacher to have more courage, you can ask your friend if you don't understand it.
> SN2: Working together promotes inquisitiveness, a wanting to know more. (Focus Group Number 1, Khomisani School, 3 August 1998)

> We talk about curriculum change over breakfast and everywhere else! We are always talking about the change here. (Focus Group Interview Number 2, Letjatji School, JM1, 12 May 1998)

> To me, it [OBE] is a challenge. Now I have an opportunity to think, and to put that into practice. I enjoy it! Unlike in the past, this is something different to offer, there was no room for this in the past. Now there is a place for your own initiative. We work together and enjoy it. (Video Discussion Interview, Letjatji School, WK, *Clothing,* 26 October 1999)

> Co-operation helps us….OBE has brought co-operation, if we are all lost [and do not know what to do], we don't make mistakes alone. We are now more united. (Focus Group Number Interview 1, Mashamba School, AM, 27 May 1998)

> EM4: We now have a choice in doing things - I think it's great....
> SM3: I am very much interested in OBE. I feel happy when I see the children learn. What they are learning are things like, find the main idea. I feel very happy. Learners are free to participate and I like that. In the past they were afraid and not free to say what they were thinking. You can come in [to my classroom] and see the skills I have taught my learners. I felt I have achieved something....We talk about OBE a lot, whenever we meet, whenever we come across a new thing. During lunch time - we talk at anytime…. Some of us talk to friends and relatives. We talk about OBE and the changes it has brought to Mashamba. (Focus Group Interview Number 2, Mashamba School, 27 May 1998)

> They [the learners] don't become bored [in class] and nor do we [the teachers]….I like that! (Video Discussion Interview, Mashamba School, NM, *Gender,* 23 November 1999)

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I am very happy. This is a good thing in reality, this OBE. I like it and follow it, I think I will become a good teacher. (Video Discussion Interview, Mashamba School, SL, *Circulation of Air*, 23 November 1999)

MM2: Planning the scheme of work for OBE is difficult. It means us to work in groups.
MR: But when you succeed, you feel very much challenged and happy. We say, "You've done it!"...
MM2: We plan together.
MR: We help each other to choose what to teach….
TM3 To us, we feel great because we find it is a challenge from the government. To be the first people to be given a challenge - we want to make use of it, and let the world see we can do it. And also show the importance of OBE. Even if the government stopped implementing it, we can push for it….
MR: OBE belongs here, I think so because those pamphlets [teacher development booklets] from the government are not detailed. We break it into pieces for ourselves. I think I can say that we can give credit to ourselves.
AN2: Another thing is we feel free. OBE has given us a way that really suits today's environment. It helps us do things ourselves. We like to do it for ourselves. (Focus Group Interview Number 1, Mutshetshe School, 4 August 1998)

SN4: It is a challenge as it makes teachers share ideas between them. The difference is that we don't have support from the department of education....
LM: And what do others here think?
IN: I like working with other teachers a lot. (Focus Group Interview Number 2, Mutshetshe School, 4 August 1998)

Working in groups of teachers is motivating….My self-confidence has improved. Teachers are more accountable in their lessons than before. (Focus Group Interview Number 1, Nwaxinyamani School, AN1, 28 May 1998)

Across all of the schools teachers continued exerting their will through shifting the nature of the project's professional working groups in a combination of ways. For example, in some of the schools the teachers extended the membership of their groups to include teachers who had not attended the in-service programme at SHC as most of the Grade 4 to Grade 6 Intermediate Phase teachers had done:

We promote team work. We meet in grade levels from one to seven and plan themes together. Teachers are integrated. (Focus Group Interview Number 2, Baropodi School, ZM, 13 May 1998)

But we came back [from the in-service programme] and implemented it [professional working groups] in the whole school, Grade 1, Foundation [Phase], Intermediate [Phase], Senior [Phase]. Not just at the Intermediate Phase [the teachers involved in the in-service programme at SHC]….We were very much excited! (Focus Group Interview Number 1, Letjatji School, PM1, 12 May 1998)

WK: The project aims at Intermediate Phase, but here at Letjatji, we include the Senior Phase. Some Grade 6 teachers also teach Grade 7, we need to include them.
JM1: We had to workshop the Foundation Phase and motivate them.
WK: The whole school was engaged. We ran workshops dealing with [OBE] terminology – to help them understand. We felt it was wise to all be involved. (Focus Group Interview Number 2, Letjatji School, 12 May 1998)

…they [teachers in the school] all come [to professional working group meetings] so we can discuss and improve on it [teaching practice] (Leadership Interview, Letjatji School, WK, 31 August 1998).

We [the professional working group] also help Grade 7. All of us, Grade 1 to 7, come together. (Focus Group Interview Number 1, Mashamba School, BS, 27 May 1998)

EM4: We have implemented OBE from Grade 1 to Grade 7….
SM3: Last year in the Foundation Phase those [teachers] felt left behind. Last year we started and they were worried. They saw us excited, sharing ideas! They used to visit our classes as well and they shared with us. (Focus Group Interview Number 2, Mashamba School, 27 May 1998)

All teachers from Grade 4 to 7 come together and plan lessons together (Focus Group Interview Number 1, Mutshetshe School, TM3, 4 August 1998).

Some of the schools also established sub-groups within the main professional working group:

We formed groups according to learning areas we taught (Pair Interview, Letjatji School, JM1, 26 October 1998).

> We decided to group teachers according to learning areas. Even the others [teachers who did not attend the in-service programme] come and support us. They come to meetings and we try to sit together. We work on a problem together. (Focus Group Interview Number 2, Nwaxinyamani School, MM1, 28 May 1998)

In addition, certain schools also deepened the actions of the professional working groups and teachers began to plan lessons together in great detail and to run curriculum workshops for each other:

> We…brainstorm themes together, sometimes we give each other some work to do at home (Focus Group Interview Number 2, Khomisani School, EB1, 3 August 1998).

> [My lesson took] about three days of planning and preparation with other…teachers. We went through several steps. First, we identified the skill to teach, then we collected resources, thirdly, we asked ourselves, "Will this lesson work?" And then lastly, we organised the activities in consideration of the age of my learners. (Lesson Discussion Interview, Mashamba School, AM, *Map Symbols*, 21 April 1998)

> I discussed it [the lesson] with my colleagues, it took a long time - up to two days. We discussed it, I planned and presented the lesson and then we discussed it again. Then I made some changes. Last night I went to sleep late! (Lesson Discussion Interview, Mashamba School, SL, *Capacity*, 14 October 1998)

> Grade 1 teachers have had workshops from the department [of education], but they were not properly workshopped. We [teachers in the professional working group] conducted another workshop when they came back. They were not deeply trained. (Focus Group Interview Number 1, Mutshetshe School, MM2, 4 August 1998)

The concept, 'participatory community', is used in this thesis to capture the creative transformations the teachers made to the project's teacher development activities. It reflects the manner in which the teachers re-shaped the implementation plan of in-service and school-based support programmes to take up teacher collaboration. The concept, participatory community, also serves to illustrate the scope, depth and intensity of the collaborative activities of these teachers. This shows the extent to which the activities of these communities differed from the type of collaboration that Talbert (1993) says does not generally

involve many teachers. It also shows how different it was in comparison to the school-wide collaboration that Little and McLaughlin (1993) say is rare, and that where it does exist it is of weak intensity. With the tacit approval of the curriculum field workers, the teachers shifted the project's social processes towards teacher collaboration in participatory communities and by so doing they began to shift their practice from isolation to collaboration. Berman (1981) would probably refer to this as the "mutual adaptation" (p. 263) of the project's activities. More profoundly, as McLaughlin (1987) reminds us, "policymakers can't mandate what matters" (p. 172), thus the project could not have decided for the teachers the extent to which any of the teacher development activities were worth taking-up; that decision was up to the teachers themselves.

Fullan and Stiegelbauer (1991) argue that the extent to which an educational change is successfully implemented largely depends on the extent to which the characteristics of that change fit the needs of the teachers involved. Huberman concurs:

> Significant changes have virtually no reality outside of what local actors think they are: why they are changes, whether they are desirable ones, how difficult they will be to execute, how well they 'fit' with the regnant teaching or organisational styles in the building. We are in the realm of perceptions, even in the most technological or materials-based projects, and these perceptions will determine the actions, or inactions, that follow. (cited in Fullan, 1992, p. 8)

At that specific moment in time, the teachers in the project found that taking-up the practice of teacher collaboration brought them together in meaningful and worthwhile ways that 'fit' within their needs and within the perceived needs of their learners. It was not OBE as such that the teachers so actively and creatively took up, but rather teacher collaboration as a development strategy. In fact, the teachers were much more convinced about the merits of teacher collaboration than they were about OBE as a curriculum model. In the words of two teachers:

UNISA

> Is OBE here to stay? Or is it just a trial that they [the Department of Education] want to practice? Is anyone positive that it is here to stay? Maybe another person will come with another curriculum soon. (Focus Group Interview Number 2, Baropodi School, PS, 13 May 1998)
>
> I don't know if OBE fits us but it is better than the previous one. Not ideal, but better. (Focus Group Interview Number 2, Nwaxinyamani School, FM, 28 May 1998)

CONCLUSION

This chapter described the social processes that existed outside the context of the six schools and explained how they provided a framework for the project as a social practice. It also showed the extent to which the teachers maintained or changed the practices of the project once it reached the situational level in the six schools. In particular, the manner in which the teachers appropriated, or took up, the notion of teacher collaboration served as an example of the capacity and will of the project teachers to determine their own practices. Before the project began, isolation had been a dominant and deeply entrenched practice in the professional lives of the teachers and clearly one that left them with few opportunities to talk, to reflect and to share ideas with each other. This practice slowly began to change as a result of the teachers' interaction with the project's planned professional development activities. Embracing such a shift in practice as this was a remarkable achievement on the part of the teachers, given the legacy of apartheid education and the authoritarian impact it had on determining how teachers traditionally worked in schools.

This chapter also highlighted several common sense assumptions about teachers and teaching that became embedded in the processes of producing and interpreting this new collaborative discourse. For example, the project assumed that the teachers in the President's Schools were in a position to make meaningful choices about their practice; thus the project supported the teachers as they took up collaboration as a development strategy. In turn, this entrenched

the project's belief that the teachers would be able to make other equally meaningful choices about their practice inside their classrooms. The project and the teachers assumed that the form of teacher collaboration that emerged in the President's Schools would provide appropriate pathways towards the successful implementation of OBE in the classroom. These assumptions are at the heart of the next two chapters, which look first at the discursive practices of the teachers and then at their actual practices in relation to the social practice of teacher collaboration.

WitsETD