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Mutual benefits? : Investigating a service teaching learning partnership

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UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND

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Research Report

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Title

Mutual Benefits?

Investigating a Service Learning Teaching Partnership

Submitted for the degree of Master of English Language Education by coursework and research report.

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DECLARATION

I declare that this research report is my own unaided work which is submitted for the Master of English Education at the university of Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted for any other degree or examination at any university.

Signed this 26th day of January, 2007, at Rosebank, Johannesburg.

Catherine M. Graetz

ABSTRACT

The study investigated a service learning partnership between mid-career teachers at a primary school in Atteridgeville and newly-qualified, mostly secondary, teachers from Nottingham University. The aim was to identify benefits and challenges with a view to optimising future partnerships. Data was gathered through participant observation and interviews, analysed by thematic content analysis and interpreted from a critical/post-colonial perspective. The research found a range of benefits accrued to the various stakeholders, including enhanced literacy teaching and learning, opportunities for shared teaching practice, and the lasting legacy of a functional library. While cross-cultural contact was identified as a benefit, it also created some tensions related to equitable power-sharing. Therefore, recommendations for future partnerships include clear and consistent communication between partners regarding expectations, goals, and accountability, closer collaboration between partners, and proactive conflict resolution mechanisms. Finally, the research highlights the viable, yet scarcely tapped, potential of such partnerships to address both pre-service and in-service training needs in teacher education in South Africa.

With thanks to the Phepo community for welcoming me,
to Kerryn and Hilary for guiding me,
and to my family for believing in me.

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CHAPTER 1 – INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND TO STUDY

Atteridgeville is an African township west of Pretoria/Tswane. The Maunde Street entrance to the township is inauspicious: to the left, the municipal garbage dump, frequented by the unemployed who eek out a meager living by collecting recyclables; to the right, one of several vast cemeteries, a grim reminder of the HIV/Aids pandemic. Yet a drive through the neighbourhood reveals a vibrant community life – rows of two- and three-room houses, stalls selling fresh produce and live chickens, or offering hairdressing or telephone services, and a steady stream of traffic as people go about their daily lives.

This is the neighbourhood served by Phepo, a primary school attended by some 850 learners, many of whom live in impoverished informal settlements on a former municipal landfill known to locals as The Mountain. These children's lives are not easy: they deal with poverty, violence, and death from a young age, and while school may offer some sanctuary from these harsh realities, getting there can be hazardous, too. Some children walk for an hour or longer, depending on their route - although there is a short-cut through the soccer field, this is also where the local gang hangs out, so the children take the longer, safer route instead.

The school itself is run by an exemplary educator, Paulina Sethole[1], who, early in her tenure, recognized the desperate need for a feeding programme at the school. Her project, *Feed the Child Feed the Nation*, galvanized the school community – students, staff and parents – and, as a result, Phepo[2] now boasts a self-sustaining organic food garden of more than 80 raised beds which usually ensure a daily hot meal for students and staff (see Plate 1). In the early years of the garden project, the children each contributed compostables and grey water on a weekly basis. Now the garden is self-sustaining, so they are less involved in regular maintenance, but it is still central to the school culture. For example, teachers integrate the garden into measurement activities for Maths or ecological investigations in Science.

[1] Her real name, used by request. All other names in this report are pseudonyms.
[2] This pseudonym, which means "feeding" in Setswana, has its origins in this inspiring story.

And Sethole's vision extended beyond feeding the body, to feeding the spirit too. She wanted her learners to be surrounded by beauty, so she has also cultivated a flourishing flower garden which greets visitors at the entrance to the school. The children's sense of optimism and pride is obvious from this description:

> At our school we have the Nelson Mandela garden. In the middle is a tall tree, the Mandela tree. The tree is surrounded by four flower gardens – the blacks, the whites, the Indians, the coloureds. After the rain the flowers make the rainbow nation (Janks and Comber 2006).

A firm believer in inculcating the values of reciprocity and social responsibility, Sethole also encouraged her learners to become involved in community upliftment projects which include donating trees to "green" an otherwise bleak neighbourhood, and starting a food garden at a nearby old age home (Janks 2003).

In the eight years since Sethole embarked on her garden project, the school has attracted a great deal of national and international acclaim, and Sethole herself was named Woman of the Year in 2002 (Janks 2003). These accolades have also brought donor funding which has been used to install an irrigation system and hail netting for the garden, buy office and audio-visual equipment for the school, equip two computer laboratories, and build six additional classrooms, a media centre and a kitchen/dining area for the school feeding scheme. In a country where there are so many depressing reports of under-resourcing, under-qualification and under-performance in African schools, Phepo represents a convincing counter to the prevailing deficit discourse.

It was this model of purposive agency that appealed to Janks when she began her research at the school in 2001. Since then, she and the Phepo teachers and learners have worked together on several innovative projects (Janks 2003; 2005; 2006), including the service learning partnership between Phepo and Nottingham University (NU), of which my study forms a part. Intriguingly, the relationship between NU and Phepo had its genesis, not in the United Kingdom, but in Australia, with Pat Thompson, who is now at NU. In collaboration with Janks and others, Thompson has had a long-standing relationship with Phepo. She has twice visited the school, and three Phepo teachers also visited the school which had been her research site in Australia before she

accepted her new position as Head of the School of Education at NU. Her interest in the school has continued, and, as a result of her enthusiasm, some of her 2005 student teachers raised funds for Phepo, and, upon qualifying, also volunteered to spend two weeks at the school during their summer vacation, in order to help Phepo staff with 'ways to use the computer centre… [and to] develop classroom materials that… integrate[d] the garden into the curriculum' (IJ-02:13)[3].

Sanctioned by the Gauteng Department of Education (GDE) for three years, the partnership is currently in its second year. In 2005, six newly-qualified NU teachers visited Phepo. Participation by Phepo teachers was voluntary, and, as the programme was new, only a few local teachers took up the offer. Those who did participate subsequently described the experience as very positive, but, because of its small scale, this visit was only documented in a progress report to the GDE (Janks and Burdett 2005). In 2006, on the other hand, most Phepo teachers showed a keen interest in the project, and this widespread support afforded me the opportunity to evaluate the partnership more formally.

1.2 AIM AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1.2.1 Aim

In broad terms, this research project aims, firstly, to investigate who benefits from the service learning partnership between NU and Phepo, in order to help the school administrators and the university coordinators decide on the merits of continuing their partnership. Secondly, it aims to describe successful problem-solving outcomes which may be indicators of positive professional, personal and/or interpersonal growth resulting from the service learning partnership. Thirdly, it aims to identify any unresolved issues encountered by the participants and offer suggestions for future improvement, if indeed the two institutions decide to continue their partnership in 2007.

[3] The coding identifies the interviewee and the minute-count on the audio-recording. A more detailed explanation follows in Sect. 3.4.1.

1.2.2 Research Questions

These three aims are reflected in the following research questions:

- Who benefits from the service learning partnership between Nottingham University and Phepo?
- What challenges had to be overcome to realize these benefits? How was this accomplished?
- What shortcomings remain to be solved? How might the partnership programme be improved in the future?

1.3 RATIONALE

In the past nine years, the school enrollment at Phepo has almost doubled, from roughly 450 learners in 1997 to about 850 in 2005 (Janks 2005), a growth rate driven to a large extent by the feeding programme offered by the school. This increase in student numbers has resulted in a pressing need for additional facilities, but fortunately the school continues to attract offers from potential donors and partners. As a consequence of all the outside interest in the school, much of Sethole's time is spent on public relations, networking and project management, which are areas of significant strength for her. The other administrators, however, while fully supportive of these fund-raising efforts, have less time to manage projects, given their own supervisory and teaching responsibilities. Although they appreciate the opportunities that these partnerships offer the school, they recognize the challenges of juggling too many disparate projects at once. Their inclination is to focus on a few key initiatives, and invite would-be partners to support these, rather than accept all offers and/or embark on new ventures.

Clearly, then, the school management team (SMT) is facing some tough decision-making regarding future collaborations, and the merits of the NU partnership will also be scrutinised as the school weighs its options. In this context, the first aim of my research (i.e. to identify who, if anyone, benefits from the project) may serve to inform their decisions regarding its future. From the informal evaluation of the 2005 visit, it is clear that the participating Phepo teachers appreciated the classroom materials the NU teachers developed, viz. an imaginative scavenger hunt based around the food garden for the Intermediate Phase and a compilation of rhymes and songs for the Foundation Phase. Laminated copies of these units were left at the school for future use, which

could potentially be a further benefit for Phepo teachers who choose to use these resources. In addition, the NU teachers organized a mini sports day and played games with the learners during their lunch breaks and after school. The learners really enjoyed these interactions, their own teachers being less inclined to such energetic activities. The NU teachers, in turn, learned about South Africa during their visit and gained valuable insights into primary school education here. Also, in experiencing first-hand some of the challenges faced by local teachers, they were exposed to pedagogical practices which are quite different from those they had previously encountered. Based on these observations, it would seem that potentially all parties could benefit from the partnership; my research focused on identifying the specific benefits gained this year.

My second question addresses the challenges posed by the two-week partnership. It seemed likely that there could be some differences of opinion or misunderstandings during the visit, given the totally different contexts and cultural backgrounds of the two groups of teachers. There is also a disparity in terms of teaching experience – the Phepo teachers are all primary-trained and well into their careers, whereas the NU teachers are newly-qualified and five of the six are trained as high school science specialists. Thus, I was interested in exploring with the teachers how they worked out the glitches because successful problem-solving outcomes may be indicators of positive professional, personal, and/or interpersonal growth. From the informal evaluation of last year's visit, one of the observations was that the NU teachers learned to 'think on their feet' (interview with Thomson and Hall, Janks March 2006). Whereas, during their teacher training, there had been ample planning time and predictability in terms of expectations and implementation, at Phepo, they found themselves in an unfamiliar environment, and were initially 'somewhat surprised and frustrated by the differences in practices' (Janks and Burdett 2005). They interpreted the learning outcomes as broad guidelines and so planned deep integration across all subject areas, while the school-mandated curriculum is much more tightly structured and prescriptive, and the local teachers still emphasise content over skills acquisition, with only superficial mention of integrating themes. With the guidance of the university coordinators, however, all participating teachers found ways to be creative and flexible to ensure a positive outcome in spite of their differences. For example, once the 2005 NU teachers realized that their interpretation of the curriculum differed significantly from that of the

Phepo teachers, they 'reconsidered their projects to ensure they fit in with discrete subject areas and to be more focussed on the [Phepo] teachers' way of working' and, as a result, '[t]here was a greater sense of working together' (Janks and Burdett 2005). These observations point to positive outcomes for both groups of teachers last year, and I was looking for evidence of similar collaborative problem-solving this year.

My third research question aims to identify any unresolved issues encountered by the participants. As already indicated, the partnership has been sanctioned by the GDE for three years. Since both institutions were committed, then, for at least 2006 and perhaps for 2007 too, it seemed prudent to explore unresolved problem areas as well, in order to refine the programme. Again, however effective the current partnership may already be, there would probably be aspects that could still be improved, and this year's participants would be able to offer valuable insights into how this may best be accomplished. Based on the 2005 visit, some of this fine-tuning has already begun. For example, accommodation presented significant challenges last year, in that the NU teachers were billeted with Phepo staff. This placed an unfair strain on the hosts and hampered the visitors' mobility. In 2006, they stayed at a youth hostel in Pretoria, and used rental vehicles for transport, an arrangement they recommended for the 2007 partnership, too (IN-45:05). In like manner, I anticipated that the current participants would be able to offer helpful suggestions to inform future planning.

To sum up, then, in a small-scale case study such as this one, which is limited both in terms of sample size and time span, the findings will obviously not be generalizable to a wider context, although they may begin to identify patterns worthy of future research on a broader scale. However, I do anticipate some direct and indirect benefits to the participants. Firstly, the study findings may inform the decision-making process of the university coordinators and school administrators about whether to continue their partnership, and, if so, in what ways it may be improved. In addition, the results may provide the various stakeholders with a broader perspective on, and a better understanding of, each others' goals and viewpoints. Finally, irrespective of whether the partnership continues in 2007 or not, the learners stand to benefit, too – either from the continuation of a partnership that all stakeholders consider to be worthwhile, or from the discontinuation of a partnership deemed to be unsatisfactory.

CHAPTER 2 - LITERATURE REVIEW

Although small in scale, the Phepo-NU project juxtaposes a number of variables that make it unique and interesting. It entails a teaching partnership that crosses generations, continents, races and cultures; and it creates an opportunity to practise theory and to theorise practice within the challenging South African context of social and educational reform. The bodies of literature most relevant to these aspects, then, relate to the status of South African education, in-service teacher training, service learning, and post-colonial and critical theories.

Firstly, to understand the current situation in South African schools, and especially of African schools like Phepo, I have traced the historical background to education in South Africa, and have examined the developments of the curricular reforms introduced since the 1994 elections. In the discussion that follows, it will become apparent that, while the reforms were intended to address the historical inequities of the past, in many ways they have exacerbated them. Of particular concern in the South African context is the issue of literacy education. Some of the challenges inhere in the apartheid history, some in the hegemony of English as the dominant language of access and power, and some in the multilingual nature of the country. Whatever the causes, liberation from social and economic marginalization is contingent on mastering schooled literacy, and, since most of the Phepo children are from disadvantaged communities, the New Literacy Studies (NLS) offer useful insights.

The crisis in South African education has, in turn, created debate among teacher educators about how best to inform, support and (re)train teachers to more adequately meet their learners' needs and fulfil the curricular mandate. Hence, I have also looked at the literature on in-service teacher training (INSET). Given the specific parameters of my project, I have paid particular attention to research detailing short-term interventions and collaborations like the one under investigation here.

In addition, to situate the Phepo/NU partnership within a broader theoretical framework, I have examined the literature on experiential learning. This investigation

reveals the current partnership as a somewhat hybridised service learning programme, and highlights ethical issues and quality indicators.

Finally, because the Phepo/NU partnership entails bringing newly-qualified teachers from the advantaged United Kingdom to work with experienced teachers in a disadvantaged African school, I turned to post-colonial and critical theories for insights into the tensions that arose as a result of power differentials and the legacy of past social injustices.

2.1 Historical Background of African Education in South Africa

2.1.1 Before 1994

Early education for the Africans was administered by church-affiliated Western missionaries whose motives were often less about educating, and more about proselytizing. One self-congratulatory missionary noted in 1851:

> It is something to have changed the old kraal into a decent village – the old kaross into substantial European clothing – idleness to industry, ignorance into intelligence, selfishness into benevolence, and heathenism into Christianity (quoted in Trapido 1980, p. 249, in Christie 1986, p. 37).

At around the same time, the British governor of the Cape, Sir George Grey, advocated an African educational policy aimed at turning 'a race of troublesome marauders [into] useful servants, consumers of our goods, contributers to our revenue' (Rose and Tumner 1975, p. 205, in Christie 1986, p. 37). Thus the motives of the Christian missionaries, and the colonial rulers who encouraged their efforts, are clearly self-serving.

After the Nationalist Party came to power in 1948, control of African education passed to the Department of Bantu Education, and the resultant two-tier education system further disadvantaged Africans. For example, primary education was free and compulsory for white children, whereas African education was neither; white teachers had university training, whereas African teachers did not (Adler and Reed 2002, p. 19); and white children were prepared for middle-class careers, whereas African children were trained to be labourers. Neither was this a covert policy, as shown by this parliamentary speech:

> [W]e should so conduct our schools that the native who attends those schools will know that to a great extent *he must be the labourer in the country* (quoted in the Eiselen Report 1951, in Kallaway 1990, p. 176, my emphasis).

In 1953, the Bantu Education Act was ratified, institutionalising mother-tongue instruction in primary schooling, less academic curricula for African learners, and the replacement of white teachers by black teachers (Davenport 1991, p. 535). While the Act was touted as promoting self-determination, the net effect was to further erode the quality of African education. A comparison of teachers' qualifications is illustrative. All white teachers had 12 years' formal schooling and at least a third were degreed. By contrast, 18% of African teachers only had only 8 years' formal schooling, 66% had 10, 16% had 12, and fewer than 3% had degrees (De Lange Commission Report 1978, in Davenport 1991, p. 534).

Over the next three decades, African education was increasingly characterised by dilapidated facilities, poorly qualified teachers, high teacher-student ratios, and serious overcrowding. Nevertheless, although government policy intended to limit African access to education, by the early-1970's, the secondary school population in Soweto had grown ten-fold (Boddy-Evans n.d.). At about this time, the Black Consciousness movement mounted an orchestrated campaign against Bantu Education, and neighbouring states were engaged in militant liberation struggles of their own. These factors all contributed to a heightened political awareness among local African youth.

Also at this time, the country's economy was in recession, creating high unemployment rates, especially among African families, who were, in addition, plagued by the daily injustices of apartheid legislation, the looming disenfranchisement of many citizens following independence of the so-called homelands, and widespread dissatisfaction with the gross mismanagement of African townships (Cillé Commission Report 1980, in Davenport 1991, p. 390). Hence, it is no surprise that the 1976 State mandate of Afrikaans as the medium of instruction in African primary schools sparked an angry student uprising. To quell the protest, the police used teargas and live ammunition, leaving hundreds either dead or injured. The subsequent totalitarian control measures were described by one analyst as 'the severest act of political suppression by the state since … 1960' (Kane-Berman 1979, p. 9, in Christie 1986, p. 239).

Despite increasing oppression from State authorities, African schools became primary sites of political resistance against an education system that entrenched apartheid. Intent on forcing the government to the negotiating table, youth leaders called for "Liberation Before Education", a cause which escalated violence, vandalism and intimidation at schools during the 80s and early 90s. A letter to *The World* newspaper voiced students' frustration and determination thus:

> [Our parents] have been living for years under these laws and they have become immune to them. But we strongly refuse to swallow an education that is designed to make us slaves in the country of our birth (in Boddy-Evans n.d.).

Sustained pressure from local and international quarters eventually led to South Africa's first democratic elections in 1994, and the beginning of a new order which foregrounds social equity for all the citizens of the country. Despite the reforms, however, the ANC government has faced formidable challenges in redressing past injustices. In education, for example:

> [t]he rejection of Bantu Education through protests and boycotts (often violent) … has brought a legacy of contestation of authority. Alongside this are the poor material provisioning of apartheid black schools and the conditions of poverty and disruption in black communities, which have contributed to the low value placed on schooling (Christie 1998).

Clearly, reversing such deplorable conditions entails time, effort, cooperation and capital, and the first – perhaps mainly symbolic – step in this direction was the institution of educational reforms that signalled an unequivocal commitment to democratic principles in education.

2.1.2 Challenges Posed by Educational Reforms Since 1994

Post-apartheid educational reforms, aimed at democratising education in South Africa, occurred in three stages, according to Chisolm (2005, p. 80): an initial 'cleansing' of racist and sexist elements immediately after the election in 1994, followed, in 1997, by the introduction of Curriculum 2005 (C2005), a progressive document advocating student-centred pedagogy and outcomes-based education (OBE), and a subsequent review in 2000 which gave rise to the current National Curriculum Statement (NCS).

While these innovations were necessary, their implementation has caused a degree of angst, especially amongst African teachers, many of whom are still under-qualified. Although provincial education departments attempted to disseminate information about the proposed curricular changes, these teachers were ill-prepared to implement them in their classrooms and so the early roll-out was confusing and haphazard.

A major obstacle initially was understanding the educational jargon of C2005. In his scathing critique of the document, Jansen (1998) pointed out that:

> a teacher attempting to make sense of OBE [would] not only have to come to terms with more than 50 different concepts and labels but also keep track of the changes in meaning and priorities afforded to these different labels over time (p. 323).

Although the subsequent review aimed to 'promote conceptual coherence, have a clear structure and be written in clear language' (Chisolm 2005, p. 87), it appears that interpretation of the concepts is still problematic, especially for African teachers. At Phepo, for example, the Head of Curriculum, Alice, is the only staff member who has a thorough grasp of the requirements of the NCS. Consequently, she single-handedly prepared the annual schemes of work for the entire school, a task that would normally fall within the ambit of each individual teacher's planning duties. While Alice's colleagues appreciate her efforts, the fact that she had to go to these lengths to ensure that Department of Education (DoE) directives are being met suggests that interpretation of the NCS is still daunting, despite the purported streamlining.

Closely allied to the difficulties of interpretation are issues of implementation. Under-qualified teachers lack the theoretical knowledge and skills to actualise the vision of the NCS in their classrooms. As a result:

> outcomes become the focus of over-specification, i.e. hundreds of little objectives being defined in an attempt to be precise about what is meant… [and] teachers teach to the minutiae of outcomes (Jansen 1998, p. 326).

A cursory glance at the Phepo schemes of work provides evidence of such a situation, with lock-step meeting of specific outcomes in discrete content areas within a tight time frame. Such narrow interpretation and rigid implementation are quite contrary to the

flexible integrative methods to which the NU teachers are accustomed, and they posed challenges in both 2005 and 2006.

The student-centred approach propounded by the NCS requires independent research by learners. This ideal, however, becomes almost impossible to realise in the many seriously under-resourced schools which do not even have enough textbooks for all students, let alone libraries of supplementary reference materials (Rural Education Report 2005). Neither is the ubiquitous internet an answer in these schools: firstly, the computer hardware is prohibitively expensive; secondly, even in a school like Phepo which has an online laboratory, connectivity is slow and erratic; thirdly, most teachers are not computer literate; and finally, the hegemony of English on the internet poses problems for learners for whom it is a second or foreign language.

Not only are resources lacking, but facilities are rudimentary, too (Rural Education Report 2005). Thus, classrooms are often overcrowded and, with no substitution system for absent teachers, classes typically "double up". On one of my visits to Phepo, four teachers were absent, so some classes had sixty or more learners. Despite OBE ideals, it is understandably very difficult to facilitate collaborative group work under such conditions. Even under normal circumstances, and in classrooms where desks are arranged in pods, closer investigation often reveals this to be a superficial concession, with teaching still dominated by teacher exposition and triadic dialogue (McKay and Chick 2001, p. 406). Research suggests this has as much to do with physical constraints as resistance to change: in their study of the Wits Further Diploma in Education (FDE) programme, Adler and Reed (2002) found that 'the majority of teachers in our sample… are taking up forms of learner-centred teaching *that are not accompanied by the substance*' (p. 111, my emphasis). In other words, while perhaps beginning to subscribe to the ideals of the learner-centred approach, these teachers have not yet fully negotiated their own new role as facilitators of their students' learning.

This latter problem is compounded by the fact that South African classrooms are unequivocally multilingual. This is recognised in the national Language in Education Policy (LiEP) which accords all eleven official languages equal status and respect, and asserts learners' constitutional right to use and be educated in the official language of their choice (DoE 1997). Nevertheless, local school language policies, shaped largely

by representations from the parent body, often appear to thwart the LiEP intentions by mandating English as the Language of Learning and Teaching (LoLT). Although ostensibly an expedient to facilitate communication between teachers and learners of different language backgrounds, the significant 'cultural capital' (Bourdieu 1991, p. 18) of the language is a powerful determinant. Furthermore, mother-tongue education is tainted by the abhorrent policies of Bantu Education, and so parents remain sceptical of cited research in its favour. This situation places many students in the untenable position of having to learn new concepts from an unfamiliar culture in a foreign language. It also presents teachers with significant challenges: firstly, they have to scaffold their learners' understanding of increasingly abstract, and often unfamiliar, concepts; secondly, they have to mediate their shift from the informal spoken vernacular to the formal written English of the relevant discipline; and finally, they have to facilitate their 'border crossing' (Cleghorn and Rollnick 2002) between their own culture, on the one hand, and that of a school system which reflects the dominant Western culture, on the other.

These challenges of integration and inclusivity in a multicultural, multilingual society are not uniquely South African, as Nkomo et al point out:

> Internationally, the massive global shifts of populations over the last century has seen the penetration of apparently relatively homogeneous national populations by peoples from beyond those national boundaries and borders (2004, p. 4).

Nor are there any simple or universally applicable answers to these challenges, although, in South Africa, literacy education and teacher training are unquestionably seminal to the solution.

2.2 Literacy as a Social Practice

Given the socio-political tenor of many of the challenges in South African education, the ideological stance of the NLS presents a particularly appropriate theoretical lens, for it has, as Luke points out:

> one generational, cultural and ultimately political response: an abiding commitment to literacy as a means of social transformation – for individuals and communities, for cultures and nation-states (in Pahl and Rowsell 2005, p. xiii).

The central tenet of NLS theorists is that, although literacy entails cerebral processes, it is fundamentally a social practice, so their focus is on 'people's use of oral language around texts, and [on] the ways in which the meaning and use of texts is culturally shaped' (Maybin 2000, p. 197).

Scribner and Cole (1981) were the first to realise that literacy can only be understood in the social context in which it occurs. Street (1984) rejected the autonomous view of literacy as a set of neutral and universal technical skills, in favour of an ideological model in which:

> the meaning of literacy depends on the social institutions in which it is embedded … [and] the particular practices of reading and writing that are taught in any context depend upon such aspects of social structure as stratification… and the role of educational institutions (1984, p. 8).

This approach offers a more culturally sensitive and inclusive view of literacy practices as they vary from one context to another. Heath (1983) highlighted the impact of different literacy practices on children's adjustment to schooling, and Gee (1996) described the conflict experienced by non-mainstream students caught in the 'borderland' between opposing primary and secondary Discourses. Barton (1994) therefore proposed an ecological model of literacy which stresses the interaction between individuals, their activities and their environment. He explains:

> Rather than isolating literacy activities from everything else in order to understand them, an ecological approach aims to understand how literacy is embedded in other human activities, its embeddedness in social life and in thought, and its position in history, language and learning (p. 32).

Barton and Hamilton (1998, p. 6-7) distinguish between 'literacy events' which are observable, often routine, activities in which literacy plays a role, and 'literacy practices' which are the culturally shaped and regulated ways in which people daily use written texts and which reflect personal and social values, attitudes and feelings towards literacy. They further explicate their social theory of literacy in six propositions which emphasise that literacy practices can be inferred from literacy events that are mediated by texts; that literacies are domain-specific and historically situated; that they are both shaped by and reflective of the cultural worldviews, ideological intentions and socioeconomic aspirations of the communities in which they occur; and that they are not immutable, but rather subject to changes over time. Thus,

contrary to earlier views of being literate as the passive acquisition of a finite set of definable technical competencies, the NLS theorists hold that '[t]o be literate is to be active; it is to be confident with these [social] practices' (Barton 1994, p. 29).

A logical corollary of this more open-ended definition is the multiliteracies approach of the New London Group. These scholars reject traditional literacy pedagogies which are restricted to 'formalised, monolingual, monocultural and rule-governed forms of language' (Cope and Kalantzis 2000) in favour of an approach to literacy teaching and learning that:

> account[s] for the multifarious cultures that interrelate and the plurality of texts that circulate… [and] for the burgeoning variety of text forms associated with information and multimedia technologies (p. 9).

The pedagogical theory they propose has four interrelated components (pp. 31-36):

- situated practice which constitutes immersion in meaningful practices within a community of learners;
- overt instruction in which the teacher actively and explicitly scaffolds learning;
- critical framing which entails analysis of covert ideological implications; and
- transformed practice in which learners transfer their understandings to novel situations reflecting personal goals and values.

As Gee (1996, 2000), Heath (1983) and Barton et al (2000) variously observe, middle-class families systematically integrate school-based literacy practices into their home discourses, thereby rendering the boundaries between the two more permeable and enhancing their children's chances of success because 'their induction into specialist [i.e. school] domains has been built via rich bridges to their lifeworlds' (Gee 2000, p. 66). This is not the case for minority or non-mainstream children, for whom such explicit bridging is not provided. They may also find themselves in the double-bind of having to choose between continued membership of their home or primary discourse and by implication a life of social, economic and political marginalization, or acceptance into the dominant discourses of school-based literacy and its presumed privileges, prestige and profit, but possible concomitant denigration of their lifeworlds and alienation from their communities (Gee 2000, p. 66).

Neither of these options is palatable, and a multiliteracies pedagogy offers a viable alternative. Newfield and Stein (2000) were quick to recognize its potential in the South African context:

> 'Multiliteracies' captures and validates the diversity of people's literacies in specific sites and has a flexibility which seeks to include rather than marginalize (p. 294-5).

The pedagogy recognizes that, as learners apply their unique 'funds of knowledge' (Moll et al 1992) to novel situations, they are better able to demonstrate mastery or insight if allowed to select from a broader repertoire of modalities than the exclusively language-based.

While the more culturally sensitive approach to literacy as a social practice and the more inclusive multiliteracies pedagogy are important paradigm shifts in literacy education, their benefits will only be felt in South African classrooms if the teachers receive appropriate pre- and/or in-service training. Hence, in the following section, I will consider the efficacy of some such initiatives, both local and international.

2.3 In-Service Teacher Training

As mentioned above, African education is complicated by the fact that the languages and cultures represented in the classroom not only differ from each other, but also from the prestigious discourses valued by the school system. As is evident from the ethnographic studies of Heath (1983), Wells (1986) and Gee (1996), non-mainstream learners are at serious risk of school failure if their 'funds of knowledge' (Moll et al 1992) are not harnessed to facilitate their full integration into academic discourse. Hence, teachers have a moral and a professional duty to mediate their learners' simultaneous linguistic, cognitive and cultural border-crossings.

Although obviously challenging, the task is not insurmountable, and well-trained teachers use a variety of resources and teaching strategies to promote their learners' linguistic and conceptual development. However, successful implementation depends on sound pedagogy, and Jansen (*Business Day*, February 6th, 2006) urges the DoE to focus funding on the 3 T's – teacher training, good textbooks and time spent teaching – to accomplish this. Teacher training – both pre- and in-service – is the single most pressing need in South African education, particularly in the disadvantaged

communities where ‘tens of thousands of teachers… remain unqualified or underqualified, [or] hold meaningless teaching certificates’ (Jansen 2006, p. 9). He warns that ‘[t]eaching will remain… an under-valued profession unless and until it demands the same, or even superior, standards of competence from its practitioners’. Therefore, he advocates the licensing of teachers to ensure competence.

The effective use of texts and other resources is a crucial and related issue. For example, research in eight countries shows a positive correlation between learner achievement and effective textbook use (Fuller and Clark 1993, in Moulton 1997, p. 2). Nevertheless, Harris et al (1997, in Moulton 1997, p. 6) discovered that often texts were neither distributed to learners nor even used by teachers, primarily because replacement costs were exorbitant and/or because the learners were not fluent enough in English to understand the texts and the teachers lacked the skills to bridge the comprehension gap. To ensure effective textbook use, these researchers recommended teacher training in the effective use of texts; provision of supplementary remedial and enrichment materials; routines for effective textbook distribution and tracking; and education for parents and learners on the appropriate care of books.

In a pilot-study of locally-produced science instructional materials:

> [t]he researchers found that teachers required intensive training in use of the materials... Not all understood the subject matter of the lessons, fewer knew effective pedagogical strategies, and even fewer understood how to use the materials in the context of the standard curriculum. To improve skills and knowledge in these three areas, they needed ongoing support (Moulton 1997, p. 7).

These findings are particularly pertinent in the South African context because, in the past ten years, the DoE has made concerted efforts to ensure that classrooms are resourced with textbooks that are culturally appropriate and that support the new OBE curriculum. However, as is apparent from Moulton’s (1997) review, the physical presence of texts in classrooms does not guarantee their use; neither does effective instruction or successful learning necessarily follow from mere use. Rather, ‘[t]eachers’ use of textbooks is influenced by their own experience, training and support… and improving textbook use requires improving teachers’ (p. 17).

Stein and Janks (2006) concur, noting the lack in South Africa of fully literate teachers who view literacy as an applied and situated skill, honed through extensive exposure to texts for both instrumental and leisure purposes. Many teachers do not read – they can read, but books do not form a central part of their out-of-school lives. Stein and Janks caution that:

> [u]nless pre- and in-service teacher education produces teachers who embody these understandings, we believe that any interventions in relation to subject competence or literacy pedagogy will simply not translate into the production of our children as fully literate subjects (2006).

In other words, improving teachers' literacy must precede raising learners' literacy levels.

Jansen's third T, time, refers to maximizing teaching time. There is a high rate of absenteeism – both of learners and teachers – due to illness, poverty, low morale, poor working conditions and high stress levels. However, of equal concern is the unproductive use of learning time when learners are left unattended, or are simply sitting idly while the teachers mark books or complete the burdensome departmental paperwork to prove they are teaching effectively! In addition, as McKay and Chick (2001) observe, the traditional 'one-at-a-time' discourse continues to be the prevalent teaching mode in many South African classrooms, and this too erodes instructional time and diminishes student engagement substantially.

The LoLT is a further complicating factor in South African education, as teachers and learners attempt to negotiate new content in a second or foreign language. Code-switching and group work are two mediating strategies, but, as Gibbons (2003) demonstrates, success is dependent on teacher competence with the methodologies. For maximum benefit, lesson planning must specifically aim to facilitate learners' progression along the 'mode continuum [from] personal, everyday ways of making meanings toward the socially shared and more writtenlike discourses of specific disciplines' (p. 252). This entails a three-stage process from small-group experiential learning in which the home language is used to explore new concepts, through large-group report-back sessions in which teachers actively scaffold the use of the formal subject-specific discourse, to individual written reports in which learners rehearse their

newly-acquired linguistic and conceptual knowledge. Unfortunately, in the classes they observed, Adler and Reed (2002) frequently noted:

> [some] unintended consequences of the increasing exploratory talk in class, with teachers either short-cutting or not completing the journey from informal exploratory talking in the main language to formal discourse-specific writing in English (p. 90).

Clearly, these teachers had not understood the significance of mediating their students' progression along the mode continuum – and without the crucial scaffolding, the students cannot gain mastery of the high-status formal academic discourses they will need to succeed in school and beyond.

Obviously, ongoing training is essential, but there is not a strong culture of professional development in South Africa, neither are there significant financial incentives for further study, and few teachers can afford to take study leave. Teaching partnerships offer a compromise, allowing working teachers to share expertise. In an innovative approach to the traditional pre-service practicum, Kern (2004, p. 30) describes the effectiveness of placing 'clusters' of teacher candidates at host schools. This approach had several goals, viz. to link theory and practice for the benefit of both pre- and in-service teachers; to enhance the field experience of the pre-service teachers by providing the peer support of the cluster; to improve the teacher education programme; to establish working relationships between the university and local schools; and to provide professional development for experienced teachers. The results of the pilot study confirmed that '[c]ohorts of interning teachers get a richer, more coherent learning experience when they are organised in teams to study and practice *(sic)* with one another and the faculty' and experienced teachers deepened their knowledge of the theoretical underpinnings of their daily praxis. Of particular interest is the collaborative spirit which characterised this pilot study: through open communication, the university coordinators, school staff and student teachers effected changes that improved the programme over its two-year duration, and resulted in the College of New Jersey formally adopting the 'cluster teacher candidate model' into their teacher training programme from 2002.

In another study, Comber and Kamler (2005) followed five Australian teacher partnerships over a period of three years. Although their participants worked together

for much longer than the teachers in my research, the similarities between the two projects are striking: both entail collaborations of early- and late-career teachers, both aim to link university-based theory and school-based practice, and both involve designing classroom activities and materials to more appropriately meet the needs of marginalised students.

Early in their study, they found the disparity between the 'expert knowledge' of the younger teachers and the 'practised expertise' of the older teachers hampered open dialogue between the partners (Comber and Kamler 2005, p. 110). For example, the younger teachers were reluctant to ask questions because they did not want to seem inadequate, whereas the more experienced teachers hesitated to share their knowledge because it might be outdated and irrelevant. In this regard, the role of the university coordinators proved crucial:

> We worked together on questions and issues [which] enabled experienced teachers to re-theorise some of the practices and strategies they had acquired over their professional life, and early-career teachers to bring to the analysis more recent understandings of what counts as literacy (Comber and Kamler 2005, p. 121).

The resultant synergy was beneficial to all participants – the university researchers enhanced their understanding of literacy methodologies and practitioner research, the younger teachers learned from their more experienced colleagues, and the older teachers 'rediscovered many teaching strategies that had become lost in the daily struggle' (Comber and Kamler 2005, p. 121).

2.4 Service Learning

2.4.1 Defining service learning

As experiential education proliferates both internationally, and increasingly in South Africa, so, too, do different definitions and models. Hence, in order to situate the Phepo-NU partnership within an appropriate theoretical framework, I will consider the range of current definitions, and distinguish between the various approaches. As this partnership does not fit neatly into any one particular category, I will then clarify precisely what will be meant by service learning for this research project.

Some theorists describe service-learning broadly as 'the various pedagogies that link community service and academic study so that each strengthens the other' (American Association for Higher Education 1997, in Lazarus 2000, p. 10). Such programmes are coordinated by universities with the aim of enriching student learning through service to the community, with the underlying philosophy that '[s]tudents learn best not by reading the Great Books in a closed room but by opening the doors and windows of experience' (Ehrlich 1995). In the light of this definition, the Phepo-NU partnership is a service learning venture, given the emphases on the intentional integration of theory and practice, intended benefits to all participants, and meaningful involvement in real-world contexts.

However, other definitions are more exacting. For example, Castle and Osman (2003) describe service-learning as a formal, credit-bearing component of university coursework in which community service is fully integrated into the academic curriculum. In addition, almost all theorists emphasise the central role of structured reflection in enabling students to turn service into learning. Considered in this light, the Phepo-NU partnership is less clearly service learning. Firstly, since the NU teachers self-fund the trip, their participation is voluntary. Secondly, the project follows *after* the completion of their coursework, so the community service is not integrated into the curriculum, nor is it credit-bearing. Thirdly, for both these reasons, the university coordinators cannot mandate formal reflection practices like journalling. Nevertheless, the intention to link theory and practice is an explicit objective of the partnership, and the NU coordinator suggested reflective journalling and/or videotaping as ways to accomplish this. In addition, in daily debriefing sessions, the participating teachers reflected informally on their experiences and how these connected (or not) to their prior learning.

This raises the question of whether the partnership is a service learning project, or if it is more appropriately defined as another form of experiential learning. Table 1 distinguishes between the various initiatives by representing them on a continuum that ranges from an exclusive focus on service at one extreme to an exclusive focus on learning at the other. Of course, a schematic representation such as this is convenient, but reality is never so clear-cut or rigid. In fact, from this comparison, it becomes clear that the Phepo-NU partnership has features of both field education and service learning.

Like field education, it is co-curricular and not integrated into the academic curriculum. On the other hand, although the visit is of short duration, attempts to address long-term community problems are built into the programme (e.g. the need for INSET). Also typical of service learning, the partnership expressly aims to link theory to practice and to benefit all participants, and reflection is an integral, if informal, part of the learning process. Based on these considerations, then, I suggest that the project more closely resembles a service learning partnership. However, the issue of mutual benefits will ultimately be the decisive factor, so a final determination will be made in Sect. 4.1, once all the benefits have been assessed.

2.4.2 Philosophical underpinnings of service learning

Theorists trace the early roots of service learning as a pedagogy to John Dewey's teachings. Although he never explicitly referred to service learning as a conceptual framework, his writing informs five of its central features: theory/practice linkages, democratic community, social service, reflective enquiry and education for social transformation (Saltmarsh 1996). More recently, social theories of learning have gained prominence. Vygotsky's (1978) theory of social cognition stresses the mediating role of 'more knowledgeable others' in helping children internalise new concepts, and Lave and Wenger (1991) highlight the crucial role of experienced mentors in inducting inexperienced learners into a 'community of practice'. As Castle et al (2004) observe, situated learning opportunities are essential for new teachers:

> to engage in sustained, direct interaction with other participants in a community of practice, including more experienced learners, tools and resources… allowing them to move from 'peripheral' to more 'legitimate' participation in the community of practice (p. 6).

CONTINUUM OF APPROACHES TO EXPERIENTIAL EDUCATION

Table 1: Approaches to experiential education

SERVICE				**LEARNING**
Volunteerism • primary focus on service, inherently altruistic • main beneficiary is recipient of service; any learning that accrues to provider is unintentional and serendipitous • e.g. regular visits to lonely seniors	**Community service** • primary focus on service, entails more structure and commitment • main beneficiary is recipient of service, although some learning accrues to provider due to extended involvement • e.g. serving in soup kitchen for homeless	**Service learning** • balanced focus on learning goals and service outcomes • equal benefits accrue to service providers and recipients • credit-bearing; service and learning explicitly linked through frequent structured reflection • e.g. physiotherapy student working in rehabilitation centre for academic credit	**Field education** • primary focus on enhancing learning in chosen field of study • main beneficiary is service provider; some implicit aims to benefit recipient • co-curricular and related to, but not fully integrated with, academic studies • not aimed at addressing long-term community problems • e.g. social workers work for service agency during professional training	**Internships** • primary focus on learning by providing hands-on experiences • main beneficiary is service provider whose academic or vocational learning is maximized • e.g. vacation work at law firm for legal student

(adapted from Furco, 1996:10-12)

2.4.3 Quality indicators of effective service learning

In a review of the research literature on service learning, Billig (2000, p. 658-664) identifies a wide range of potential benefits to be derived from effective service learning programmes. These include a positive impact on the participants' personal and social development, civic responsibility, academic learning, and career aspirations, as well as benefits to the participating institutions and communities. Although these benefits do not automatically accrue to all participants of all partnerships all of the time, the most effective partnerships include the following quality indicators:

- clear educational goals that link theory to practice, and involve participants in their own knowledge construction;
- cognitively challenging tasks that have clear goals, meet genuine needs, and have significant consequences for all participants;
- maximal participant control in selecting, designing, implementing and evaluating the service project;
- respect for diversity as demonstrated by participants, practices and outcomes;
- communication, interaction and collaboration between partners;
- thorough preparation of participants for all aspects of service work;
- critical reflection before, during and after service; and
- multiple methods to acknowledge, celebrate and validate the service work.

These indicators were helpful as I evaluated the Phepo-NU partnership.

2.4.4 The ethics of service learning

Although in service learning, the ideal is for there to be mutual benefits for all partners, this is unfortunately not always the case. In his stinging critique, "To Hell with Good Intentions", Illich (1968) pilloried the high-handed paternalism inherent in many international service missions. While some of these 'vacationing salesmen (*sic*) for the middle-class "American Way of Life",' claim to have matured as a result of their volunteer experiences abroad, most return 'ridiculously proud of their "summer sacrifices".' His sentiments are echoed by Weah, Simmons and Hall (2000):

> The 'missionary ideology' that currently underlies much of the service-learning movement is mostly the result of a series of decisions intended to 'do good things' for others, and so the movement does not directly acknowledge what those others, particularly communities of color, might have to offer…. *To limit our thinking about*

> *service-learning to constructing 'helping' models is to diminish the reciprocal power of service-learning for all parties involved* (p. 675, my emphasis).

Hence, Osman (2005) argues that critical theory provides 'an orientation [to service learning] that is driven by emancipatory interests, with respect for the collective and individual experiences of people's lives, [and recognizes] the centrality of human agency' (p. 2). From her work in a South African context, she considers this an appropriate theoretical 'coupling' because both focus on the daily realities of marginalized communities, honour local wisdom, and challenge the narrow constraints of legitimate knowledge. Given that the Phepo-NU partnership is potentially fraught with binaries – centre/margin, black/white, master/apprentice, young/old – a critical approach to service learning is instructive since it foregrounds 'the politics of difference and the struggle over legitimate knowledge … allow[ing] us to call into question dichotomies between theory and practice, academic and experiential and universal and situated knowledge' (Osman and Castle, 2006, p.7).

With this in mind, then, I turn to a discussion on how post-colonial and critical theories inform this investigation.

2.5 Post-Colonial and Critical Theories

In this section, I will deal first with relevant aspects of post-colonial theory, and will then explore broader interpretations of critical theory as they pertain to the Phepo-NU partnership.

For my research, the most salient insights from post-colonial theory emanate from Pennycook's (1994) writings on English Foreign Language education. Since the 1994 elections in South Africa, there have been concerted efforts to equalise the balance of power between the eleven official languages of the country. Yet, English has become the country's *de facto* lingua franca, despite the fact that:

> [i]t attacked the black person who spoke it with its racist images and imperialist message…, scorn[ed] the languages it sought to replace, and told the colonised peoples that mimicry of its primacy among languages was a necessary badge of their social mobility (Searle 1983, p. 68, in Pennycook 1994, p. 308).

Searle's latter point hints at the reason for the dominance of English: its symbolic capital (Bourdieu 1991) lures local users with promises of power, prestige and profit. As indicated earlier, this has significant implications for education, and for cultural and linguistic diversity, in South Africa.

Another valuable insight is the universalization of the middle-class worldview, and Pennycook (1994, p.162-167) quotes several post-colonial theorists who warn of the hubris of imposing Western values on local conditions. Nayar notes that visiting teachers may judge local conditions unfairly, based on expectations of small homogenous classes of keen students from literate cultures, and motivated teachers in well-resourced schools. Kachru cautions against imprudently generalising pedagogies 'often with weak theoretical foundations, and with doubtful relevance to the sociological, educational and economic contexts of the Outer Circle'. Finally, Wu Jing-Yu implores foreign teachers not to presume they have a monopoly on teaching expertise, but instead to treat local colleagues 'as fellow teachers on an equal footing', and to be tolerant of ideas and methods different from their own. As will be demonstrated in Sect. 4.3.1, these cautions proved salutary as the current partnership unfolded.

While post-colonial theories shed considerable light on the legacies with which many Third World countries grapple, they have been critiqued for being too deterministic. Parry (1994, in Mongia 1996) observes that:

> [by] assigning an absolute power to the hegemonic discourse [they deny the agency and resistance of the colonized] despite abundant evidence... of contestation and struggle against diverse forms of institutional and ideological domination (p. 8).

Other critics have suggested that the influence of binary oppositions has been exaggerated. Thus, Giroux (1992) contends:

> they have often unwittingly imitated the colonial model of erasing the complexity, complicity, diverse agents, and multiple situations that constitute the enclaves of colonial/hegemonic discourse and practice (p. 20).

Critical theorists, by contrast, attribute social inequality not to historical binaries, but to ideological practices that are accepted as natural and universal 'obviousnesses'

(Althusser 1971, p. 46), consider power (i.e. the ability to control events to achieve one's aims) as implicit to all social interactions, and believe that struggle is a prerequisite for social justice. They are particularly concerned with critiquing situations in which 'one group *unquestioningly* and/or *unconsciously* accepts a value system that results in privilege for some other group at the cost of its own welfare' (Hinchey 1998, p. 18). Thus, Paulo Freire, leading proponent of critical pedagogy, aimed to 'conscientize' his students to the 'constructed consciousness' responsible for their social reproduction, and then mobilise them to emancipatory social action or 'praxis'. He believed that education should empower learners first to read the world, and only then to read the word (Freire and Macedo, 1987, in Gee, 1996:37). Popkewiz and Fendler (1999, p.48ff) suggest that it is this latter aspect that distinguishes critical pedagogy from critical thinking: whereas both encourage critique of prevailing cultural norms, the latter stops short of redress, while the former insists on it. And for good reason, as Hinchey explains:

> It is precisely because critical consciousness could lead to despair and/or violence that an essential element of critical theory is praxis: *action* based on reflection. Critical consciousness is indispensable to envision change, but it is also insufficient to realise it... If critical questioning never leads to action, then the process is incomplete (1998, p. 145).

This suggests that more is at stake than merely problematizing discourses or exploding master myths (Gee 1996, pp. 86-7). Indeed, as Althusser stresses, we are all 'always already interpellated by ideology as subjects' (1971, p. 50), and therefore need to liberate ourselves from its oppression, too. To Spivak this entails:

> the unlearning of one's own privilege. So that, not only does one become able to listen to that other constituency, but one learns to speak in such a way that one will be taken seriously by that constituency (1990, p. 42).

Spivak's words are perhaps particularly salient in the current context, for, as South Africa frees itself of the shackles of its colonial past, its people are understandably less trusting of the magnanimous Centre. Instead, they are intent on 'reclaiming the local' (Canagarajah 2005), i.e. asserting their right to find solutions that are culturally and contextually more appropriate to local needs and conditions. This entails:

> a process of negotiating dominant discourses and engaging in an ongoing construction of relevant knowledge in the context of our history and social

> practice… from the alternate position of our own locality, which is more relevant for our community life and speaks to our interests (Canagarajah 2005, p. 13).

Notably, he emphasises the necessity of a shift in the 'locus of enunciation' (Bhaba 1994; Mignolo 2000; in Canagarajah 2005, p. 14): whereas previously, knowledge was constructed, interpreted or evaluated from the perspective of the dominant discourses of the centre, a strategy which perpetuated the master myths of the ruling elite, Canagarajah proposes that a 'grassroots' analytical perspective be adopted instead. He argues that the post-colonial vantage point affords a 'double vision' which reveals the pros and cons of both global and local systems of knowledge, and also presents unique opportunities to construct new knowledge that transcends the simplistic global/local dichotomy.

Hence, central to the answer of who benefits from the Phepo-NU partnership must be Pennycook's (1994) concerns with political motive:

> The first, key question … demands justification *in terms of the interests served by the production of this knowledge*. Is it research that is supportive of an inequitable status quo or is it aimed at social, cultural and political change? Second, if … the knowledge is framed … in terms of *dealing with local specificities and struggles*, then [it] may be seen as located in a specific context and thus usefully applicable both to that context and to whatever generalizable concerns seem possible (p. 185, my emphasis).

It is with these central principles in mind that the collaborating universities entered into this research, and it is in this light that I have evaluated this partnership.

CHAPTER 3 – METHODOLOGY

Given my critical stance, I adopted the epistemologically compatible qualitative research methodology. Critical theory examines issues of power and social injustice in advocating for change, redress and equity; literacy as a social practice acknowledges the ideological nature of literacy and is 'committed to social transformation… and redress with particular reference to those whose communicative resources have either gone unrecognised or been used to maintain subordination' (Prinsloo and Breier, 1996, p. 6); and a qualitative methodology, with its emphasis on observing behaviours as they occur in their natural setting, its concern with process rather than product, and its interest in how people make sense of their experiences (Merriam 1988, pp. 19-20, in Cresswell 2002, p. 145), also honours a multiplicity of experiences, perspectives and interpretations. In addition, whereas a quantitative approach seeks to prove or disprove preordained hypotheses in measurable and often positivistic terms, in qualitative methodologies, hypotheses emerge as all participants actively engage in the research process. The epistemological congruence of the three theoretical frameworks is clear, in that they share the ideal of revealing the faces of the faceless, hearing the voices of the voiceless, and restoring power to the powerless.

In eliciting personal perceptions, however, it was important for me to recognise that the participants were 'directly involved in constructing the data', (Knobel and Lankshear 1999, p. 88), as was I, for, in selecting, describing and interpreting the data, I inevitably mediated it through my own worldview, too. Hence, although qualitative methodologies provide 'a "deeper" understanding of social phenomena' (Silverman 2000, p. 8) than would be obtained from quantitative methods, they also raise questions of credibility which I had to address. To ensure validity, therefore, I tried to obviate bias by considering *all* the evidence in interpreting the data; and to ensure reliability, I have provided a detailed account of my methodology (Creswell 2002, p. 159).

Since I was investigating the perceived benefits of the 2006 two-week service learning partnership between NU and Phepo, I chose a single case study design which, according to Knobel and Lankshear (1999, p. 95), is 'the intensive (in depth and detailed) study of a bounded, contemporary phenomenon', where 'intensive' refers to

both time span and the amount of detail required, 'bounded' reflects the narrow focus on a single social unit (p. 90), and 'contemporary phenomenon' implies the investigation of phenomena as and when they occur.

3.1 Research Site

The school serves the educational and community needs of some 850 African primary students in Atteridgeville. The staff complement comprises the principal, Paulina Sethole, three other administrators, and twenty-five teaching and support staff. Besides twenty classrooms[4], the facilities include two computer laboratories, one of which is online, a library, a nutrition centre and an administrative block.

3.2 Research Participants

Participants in the partnership included both NU and Phepo teachers. The NU team comprised Sally, Beth, Anne, Abby, Erin and Anna[5], and the coordinator, Hannah. Of the NU teachers, all are high-school science specialists, except for Sally who is primary-trained. Hannah, an experienced primary teacher, is currently employed by Nottingham City Council, using innovative computer technologies to reintegrate marginalized youth into the education system.

Among the Phepo partners were four Foundation and five Intermediate teachers. The foundation teachers were Emily and Rose (Gr. 2), and Sibongile and Lydia (Gr. 1). The intermediate teachers were Sipho (Science), Lawrence (Science and computers), Kerry (Afrikaans and Arts and Culture), and Rachel and Alice (English). Two of the teachers are also heads of their respective phases. Several other Phepo teachers observed the team-teaching lessons, although they were not themselves active participants.

For my research, I interviewed representatives of the five distinct stakeholder groups – the university coordinators, the NU teachers, and the teachers, learners and the SMT of Phepo – to ensure an inclusive and democratic process, and to get a

[4] Four of these were newly-built and nearing completion at the time of the visit.
[5] Anna only joined the team in the second week, as she was climbing Mt. Kilimanjaro in the first week

comprehensive overview of their expectations, experiences and assessments. The constitution of the groups is elaborated in Section 3.3.2.

3.3 Data Collection Techniques

Since the quality of my data depended on the rapport I established with the participants, I visited the school beforehand to meet the staff and explain my research, and also introduced myself and my project, via e-mail, to the NU coordinator, Hannah. I had hoped to do likewise with the participating NU teachers, but this did not materialize, so we met once they arrived in Johannesburg.

Actual data collection at the school took place during the fortnight of 24 July to 4 August, 2006. For this purpose, I used the ethnographic field techniques of participant observation, semi-structured interviews and focus groups, as well as artifact collection.

3.3.1 Participant Observation

Because I concur with Swann's (1994, p. 27) contention that all observers are, to some extent at least, participants since their mere presence, however unobtrusive, inevitably alters the natural setting, I chose to be a participant observer in both the formal (e.g. classroom) and informal (e.g. playground and staffroom) spaces of the school, a decision which afforded some distinct advantages. Firstly, it enabled me to build rapport with the various participants during the two-week partnership; secondly, as a monolingual outsider, I could seek the necessary linguistic and/or cultural clarification; and thirdly, it seemed more authentic (and less voyeuristic) than non-participant observation.

Despite the advantages, however, I was also aware of the potential disadvantages posed by my presence. For example, to what extent did the observed behaviour represent the norm, and did my race, gender, teaching experience or perceived status have an impact? In her research into race in education, Wright (1998) at times felt 'caught in the crossfire' of the power relations that her fieldwork entailed, despite her attempts 'to build up a sense of rapport and shared humanity' (p. 74). While I could not predict how the participants would perceive me or interpret my role there, it was nevertheless important to be alert to possible effects, both during interactions and when interpreting

the data. As it transpired, it was the Phepo teachers who were initially disturbed by my presence. Perhaps because they saw me as more experienced, perhaps because they thought I was closely allied to Janks, perhaps because I had taught overseas and seemed too assertive, they felt uncomfortable with the perceived surveillance. Fortunately, Janks cautioned me about their perceptions, and I hope I allayed at least some of their misgivings. However, this confirms the unanticipated effects my presence had on the participants and highlights the importance of learning to voice one's concerns 'in such a way that one will be taken seriously by [the other] constituency' (Spivak 1990, p. 42).

I also had to develop effective methods for recording my observations to ensure accurate recall and facilitate subsequent data analysis. Following Knobel and Lankshear's (1999, p. 92) distinction, I used field notes to record my classroom observations and journalistic notes for informal exchanges. In addition, during my 45-minute drive home each afternoon, I audio-recorded my reflections on that day's events and added these transcriptions to my journalistic notes. This proved useful, both for recalling specific incidents and for cross-checking interpretations against other data sets.

3.3.2 Focus Group Discussions and/or Interviews

I opted to use the focus group interview format as it is effective in establishing 'the widest range of meanings and interpretations for the topic', especially if a non-directive approach is adopted (Fontana and Frey 2000, p. 652). Although the interview process was ultimately driven by the time constraints of individual participants, my preference was to conduct group, rather than individual, interviews for the following reasons. Firstly, interviewing over 30 individuals at the end of the two-week visit would have entailed scheduling consecutive interviews late into the afternoon and evening which would have been fundamentally disrespectful of the participants' time and their willingness to take part in the study. Secondly, group interviews offer some advantages which I hoped to tap. For example, the synergy of group discussion can generate 'rich data that are cumulative and elaborative' (Fontana and Frey 2000, p. 652), and introverted participants may be reassured by the support of colleagues.

Nevertheless, as with all methods, the group interview also has disadvantages of which I was cognisant. Prime among these were the effects of my gender/race/age/status on

interviewees and of my own biases. The emergence of an 'opinion leader' who inhibits open dialogue (Fontana and Frey 2000, p. 652) fortunately did not manifest in my interviews.

In constituting my focus groups, I concurred with Greenbaum (1998, p. 11) that '[t]he more homogeneous the group is, the better the participants will relate to each other and the higher the quality of the input they will generate', especially since I anticipated some variance in opinions. I thus planned on five groups, representing the Phepo teachers, the NU teachers, the Phepo learners, the Phepo SMT, and the university coordinators. As it happened, individual schedules necessitated some flexibility, and I ultimately had group discussions with the NU teachers (6 participants), the Phepo foundation teachers (3 participants), part of the Phepo SMT (2 participants), the Gr. 5's (5 participants), the Gr. 6's (6 participants), and the Gr. 7's (4 participants), and conducted individual interviews with the two university coordinators, two of the Phepo SMT, and the four Phepo intermediate teachers.

My interviews with the NU participants took place on the second last day of their visit, and I returned to the school the following week to interview the Phepo participants. All the discussions were audio-recorded, and my semi-structured questions (see Appendix A) focused on eliciting their perceptions, experiences and interpretations of the service learning partnership. In reviewing the questions, it will be noted that, in some cases, the same questions were posed to more than one stakeholder group. This allowed me to triangulate findings by comparing different perspectives within and across groups. On the other hand, there were also questions that were pertinent to particular groups, and these were therefore only directed to them.

3.3.3 Artifact Collection

Finally, photographs of classroom activities, lesson plans and learners' work provide contextualizing data (Knobel and Lankshear 1999, p. 93) for this study and add immediacy and richness to my description of the learners' responses to the lessons. They also illustrate more graphically the range of learning activities in which the participants engaged.

3.4 Methods of Data Analysis

The core task of the qualitative researcher, to paraphrase Geertz (1973, p. 20, in Deacon et al 1999, p. 7), is to make sense of other people's realities by 'guessing at meanings, assessing the guesses, and drawing explanatory conclusions from the better guesses'. In other words, the analysis of qualitative data requires a strong interpretive element, in order to develop '"thick descriptions", detailing how people invest their world with meaning and negotiate and contest other systems of meaning' (Deacon et al 1999, p. 7). The two methods of data analysis I used are thematic content analysis and triangulation.

3.4.1 Thematic Content Analysis

Thematic content analysis enabled me to identify, explore and interpret the patterns – and anomalies – that emerged in my data. Drawing initially on the literature, I looked for difficulties stemming from curricular reform or power differentials, evidence of pedagogical insights or synergies resulting from shared teaching practice, and clarity on the effectiveness of this as a service learning project. However, as the research proceeded, some of these themes became less relevant, whereas others emerged as more salient. For example, the NU teachers chose to organize the library as their project, which limited opportunities to build partnerships[6]. On the other hand, literacy issues gained prominence, as did questions of sustainability. This is consonant with the inductive nature of qualitative research during which the focus is sharpened as the researcher begins to understand the phenomena being studied. It is also one of the great strengths of this approach that the research is not constrained by predetermined hypotheses, but instead affords the flexibility to pursue productive new lines of enquiry as they emerge. As Hammersley and Atkinson (1995) observe:

> the analysis of data feeds into research design and data collection [in an iterative process which is] central to the 'grounded theorizing'… in which theory is developed out of data analysis, and subsequent data collection is guided strategically by the emergent theory (p. 205).

Analysis of the audio-recordings took place both horizontally (i.e. within individual interviews) and vertically (i.e. across all interviews). Before beginning transcription, I coded all field notes by date (e.g. FN-27/07/06). In the case of the audio-recordings, I identified the interviewee by initial, and noted the minute-count on the audio-recording

[6] See Chapter 4.

for easy reference and retrieval (e.g. IP-09:40 signifies a quote made in the ninth minute of my interview with Paulina). Given that I have some 7½ hours of taped dialogue, I summarised the gist of each interview first, noting the minute-count, the participant's responses in point form, and particular segments that pertained to my research questions (see Table 2).

Table 2: Excerpt of gist for individual interview

Mins.	Gist of participant responses to interview questions (IP)	Themes
	What are your reasons for participating in this partnership?	
00:30	1. Develops school, teachers	
02:00	2. Education is big issue for disadvantaged community – minimal training, changing curriculum – so this opportunity assists teachers and exposes learners to higher standards; so Phepo teachers should commit themselves to programme	Benefit to Phepo teachers and learners
03:20	3. To improve learning of teachers and learners	

The next task involved 'the development of analytic categories that capture relevant aspects of these data, and the assignment of particular items of data to those categories' (Hammersley and Atkinson 1995, p. 209). I began this phase then, with a horizontal analysis of each individual interview from which early themes, like lack of communication or accountability, emerged (see Table 3).

Table 3: Summary of findings for individual interview – horizontal cut

SUMMARY OF PERTINENT FINDINGS OF IP INTERVIEW		
Benefits	**Challenges and solutions**	**Improvements**
Phepo learners • IP-05:52 hands-on activities; library use • IP-07:10 'children want to ree-ead' • IP-13:35 new ideas **Phepo teachers** • IP-01:25, 13:35 exposure to new ideas **Wider Att'v community** • IP-07:30 library as a community resource? **NU teachers** • IP-03:45 different education system, culture and language	**Accountability/Routines** • IP-9:40 had TV in front office removed	**Limited contact between NU and Phepo teachers** • IP-17:10 more time together in classroom • IP-17:50 help with how to use library resources **Lack of communication between NU and Phepo** • IP-17:10 send NU curriculum beforehand, so they can prepare **Lack of reading resources** • IP-16:30 collect used picture books for Phepo learners

Once I had processed all individual interviews in this manner, I collated all findings into a "master" table (see Table 4). This first vertical cut allowed me to compare all the findings related to my research questions *across* the range of interviews. Because I listed the findings by stakeholder group, it also allowed me to compare similarities and differences within and across these groups. For example, below is an excerpt showing some of the benefits identified by the intermediate teachers[7].

Table 4: Summary of findings across all interviews – first vertical cut

SUMMARY OF BENEFITS ACROSS INTERVIEWS				
	Benefits to Phepo leaners	**Benefits to Phepo teachers**	**Benefits to NU teachers**	**Benefits to whole school**
IS	IS1-03:10 Pacing according to individual needs	IS1-02:45 Methodology	IS1-09:50 Benefit from exposure to new system	IS1-09:00 Library organization
IL	IL-02:15 Interesting lesson on water cycle	IL-01:30 Help with Science experiment and lesson plans	IL-07:20 Learned from Phepo teaching partners	IL0-8:30 Functional library
IR	IR-05:00ff Doubtful if there were any benefits	IR-00:45 –Teaching aids, integration of Math and LA, full involvement of all learners	IR-08:15 Don't know if they learn from us	IR-03:20 'Our library is so nice'
IK	IK-01:15 Range of new activities	IK-03:10 New ideas for using school resources	IK-05:20 Learnt to cope with large class sizes	IK-07:05 Library

In a second vertical cut, I narrowed my focus to single categories, e.g. benefits to learners. This refinement highlighted themes applicable across all the interviews, such as learner-centred teaching methodologies, novelty and literacy (see Table 5)[8]. Within these larger themes, sub-themes also began to emerge, like interesting content and cross-cultural contact within the novelty category. Finally, notable anomalies began to emerge, too; for instance, Rachel was the only teacher who could not identify any benefits to the learners.

[7] For brevity, I have included only one example per cell here.
[8] Excerpts only, by way of illustration.

Table 5: Summary of findings by category – second vertical cut

BENEFITS TO PHEPO LEARNERS			
CHILD-CENTRED METHODOLOGY	**NOVELTY**	**LITERACY**	**ANOMALIES**
Planning IS1-03:10 Pacing according to individual needs **Methodology** IT-09:30 Science work very good - felt more involved	**Interesting content** IS1-03:50 Interesting classes **X-cultural contact** IN-27:15 Exposure to outsiders who are here just for them	**Writing** IL-05:40 Writing programme good for learners who are creative **Reading** IK-07:05 Library as resource for research	IR-05:00ff 'With our learners, it's unpredictable.'

Blumer (1994, p. 7, in Hammersley and Atkinson 1995, p. 212) distinguishes between first-order 'sensitizing concepts' which 'lack specificity [but reveal] a general sense of reference and guidelines in approaching empirical instances', and second-order 'definitive concepts' which 'refer precisely to what is common to a class of objects, by the aid of the clear definition of attributes or fixed bench-marks.' The horizontal cut highlighted the initial sensitizing concepts, whereas the successive vertical cuts revealed the definitive concepts.

With regard to transcription, once I had thoroughly familiarized myself with the content of all my data sets, I then returned to salutary segments of 'telling data' (Mitchell 1984, p. 239, in Prinsloo and Stein 2004, p. 70), and transcribed these in detail. Although I have not included these detailed transcripts in this research report, the excerpts I have selected are consistent with broader patterns represented in the data corpus. In my transcriptions, I used the following conventions:

Hannah	Identifies speaker by pseudonym
T(L)	Teacher (or learner) - unidentifiable
TT(LL)	Teachers (or learners) speaking simultaneously
…	Omitted section of transcript
(inaudible)	Inaudible utterance
(laughs)	Explanation, comment or contextual information
. , ?	Punctuation is used to make transcription easier to read[9]
Bold	Signifies word/s given particular emphasis

[9] This necessarily entails some interpretation and the final form thus conveys my understanding of the speaker's utterance.

Hence, an excerpt from my interview with Lawrence is transcribed thus:

5:20	Lawrence: I was working with Hannah in the computer room, and I think I should be very much grateful CG: Mmmm-mmm Lawrence: to Hannah because she taught me how to to write a book. CG: Mmm – that's a wonderful programme! Lawrence: I did not even know how to write a book. CG: And now you're an author! (laughs) Lawrence: The programme the programme she brought us, I think will really help the learners CG: Ja Lawrence: because some of our learners are creative and therefore, if we use the programme, then we can get some authors.

Quotes in this report focus only on the interviewees' responses, not my contributions, since I will not be doing a detailed discourse or conversation analysis on the transcripts.

Finally, in examining the NU teachers' lesson plans and the samples of learners' work, I was looking for confirmation of themes already emerging from the other data, as well as evidence that their materials accommodated the Phepo teachers' goals, curricular requirements and learning outcomes, and the learners' culture, language proficiency and interests.

3.4.2 Verification

Hammersley and Atkinson (1995) identify three types of triangulation: researcher triangulation, technique triangulation and respondent triangulation. As the only researcher in this project, I was not able to use the first type, but I have incorporated the other two into my research design by comparing results from the different data sets, and by using member-checks to cross-validate my data.

Whereas triangulation presupposes that, if data sets point to the same conclusion, the interpretation is likely accurate, this is not necessarily the case. For example, interpretations may tally due to a fatal flaw in the overall research design. Therefore, anomalies or contradictions can be as revealing, and I have attempted to explain them in light of the rest of the evidence.

3.4.3 Ethics

Ethics clearance was granted by the ethics committee - protocol # 60604. Participants were fully informed beforehand about the aims of this research and of their rights should they participate. They were assured that all information would be confidential and that pseudonyms would be used in all reporting to protect their identities[10]. All participants signed letters of consent (see Appendix B).

[10] For this reason, full transcripts of interviews are not included in this report.

CHAPTER 4 – DATA ANALYSIS

The partnership between Phepo and NU is deliberately non-directive to allow participants maximum control and autonomy in shaping it to their strengths and needs. As Billig (2000) notes, design flexibility is a prerequisite for successful service learning. However, it also means that, irrespective of what may have happened during the 2005 visit, the nature, course and consequences of the 2006 partnership could not have been foreseen. Hence, it is necessary first to recount briefly how the partnership unfolded over its nine-day duration, since it fundamentally defined the project and therefore also the perceptions and experiences of all participants. Thereafter, I will analyse the data in relation to the three research questions.

As already mentioned, initially, the NU group comprised the coordinator, Hannah, and five NU teachers, Sally, Beth, Anne, Abby and Erin[11]. Their first day at Phepo amounted to an orientation. Although they had arrived with some vaguely-formed notions of partnering with local teachers, they had been explicitly advised not to prepare anything beforehand. Following introductions to the staff and a guided tour of the school, therefore, they met with the SMT to set some provisional goals. Hannah offered to team-teach with English teachers and to help learners create their own books using the computer programme, RealeBooks. Sally, the only primary-trained teacher, agreed to work with interested Foundation teachers on numeracy and literacy skills, and the science teachers volunteered to develop practical science lessons for the Intermediate Phase. Alice also asked them to sort through science kits which had been donated to the school, and to develop teacher guides on how they could be used in the classroom.

Because Phepo prides itself on its library, the NU teachers wanted to utilise the available resources in their lessons. However, a cursory glance through the shelves revealed that the books were not organized into subject areas which made locating resources difficult, and many were intended for North American high schools and so were culturally, academically and linguistically inappropriate. The visitors therefore decided that, while Hannah began to work with interested Phepo teachers, the rest of

[11] Anna joined the group later.

the team would organize the library and science resources, a task they optimistically estimated would take two days, but which ultimately occupied them, Hannah (when she was not teaching) and me (when I was not observing classes) for the entire first week. Alice, who had been using the library as her Gr. 6 classroom, vacated the area for the duration although this meant doubling-up two classes, as she was keen for the library to be a functional and integral part of the school.

The actual weeding process proved challenging. Some books were shoddy, and others patently sexist or racist, so these were easy to reject. However, opinions were divided about many others, like the classics or glossy high-school science and maths texts. On an ethical level, the NU teachers questioned whether they had the authority or the experience to make such decisions. Their concerns were allayed by Sethole who expressed her appreciation for their efforts and assured them that, despite her personal qualms about discarding any resources, she recognized that, to be fully functional, the library has to be stocked with materials that are more appropriate to the needs of the Phepo community. On a practical level, the NU teachers felt that discarding books might be construed as disrespectful, particularly in a community which has so few, so suggested that these resources be offered to local high schools. They were also concerned that the drastic clearing would leave the library seriously depleted. However, when they began to sort through the storeroom, they discovered boxes of brand-new books with which to restock the shelves. These included picture books, social studies and science trade books, text sets for literature circles[12], and several complete beginner reading programmes. They also found teaching aids like laminated posters, audio- and video-tapes, puppets and Big Books, art supplies, including paintbrushes and crayons, and science equipment like thermometers, balances, and chemicals, all of which they organized.

By the beginning of the second week, the bulk of the clearing was complete, and the visitors began to redecorate the library. They displayed some of the teaching aids, mounted colourful posters on the walls, and made labels to identify subject areas (see Plate 2). They purchased a maroon carpet to create a cosy reading corner for teachers and learners, and introduced interested Phepo teachers to the resources most pertinent

[12] Temporary mixed-ability groups of learners who read the same book and engage in authentic conversations about it (Daniels 2002).



Plate 1: Raised vegetable beds



Plate 2: Picture book display at library entrance

to their teaching assignments. They also began to work directly with the Phepo teachers and learners in the second week. Hannah continued to teach with intermediate English teachers and also ran library orientations for all classes; Sally team-taught with foundation teachers; and Beth, Erin, Anne, Abby and Anna taught Science and Arts and Culture with some of the intermediate teachers.

As already mentioned, the library project arose spontaneously, and although all stakeholders agreed it was both necessary and worthwhile, it came with some sacrifices. Firstly, with the NU team all involved in the library, individual NU teachers had less autonomy than if each were working on a self-selected project. Secondly, since most were high-school science teachers, they often deferred to either Hannah or me for advice[13] which furthered undermined their independence. Thirdly, it eroded their time with the Phepo teachers, so there was less opportunity to collaborate or build a sense of partnership.

Nevertheless, the project ended on a high note, with the final day being dedicated to re-opening the library. The ceremony was attended by representatives of the GDE, partner organizations and schools, and the Phepo staff and learners. Sethole, who had not yet seen the revamped library, was overwhelmed. She describes the scene thus:

> There was the [Gr. 5] class where it touched me more and I think that's where I shed my tears – was seeing the children seated in the library reading silently. That was to me such an overwhelming thing... And then another striking thing, Cathy, was break bell went – those children did not want to go out of the library to go and eat. It's good to be in the library – so now you see, the children are **hungry** – the children want to **ree-ead** (IP-07:10).

In other words, the transformed space was no longer just a showpiece, but a community resource already in use, and the official speeches reflected commitment to sustaining it as such: Sethole announced that the library would no longer need to be used as a classroom as Pretoria Boys' High had donated R15 000 for blackboards to complete the four newly-built classrooms, and the GDE representative pledged a teacher-librarian for 2007. Thus, the NU team felt reassured that, although they themselves had not been able to work with the Phepo teachers and learners as closely as they would have liked, their project will be sustained, and that future NU partners will be able to build on their

[13] Both Hannah and I are mid-career teachers with extensive primary school experience.

efforts. Also, as they learn how best to use the available resources, the Phepo teachers will have expert support, a prerequisite identified by Moulton (1997) for effective text utilization and meaningful professional development. These benefits were not preplanned or anticipated; rather, they occurred as a direct result of the way in which this particular partnership evolved.

I turn now to the data analysis which is organized in relation to the research questions. The first section deals with the many benefits that accrued to Phepo learners, Phepo teachers, NU teachers and others; next, I will elaborate on the problems the participants solved to facilitate collaboration; and finally, since all agreed that the partnership was beneficial and worth continuing, I will elaborate on their suggestions for future improvement.

4.1 Benefits

4.1.1 Benefits to Phepo Learners

From the data analysis, three broad categories of benefits to learners emerged: novelty, teaching methodology and literacy. The most obvious benefit for the learners is that of novelty – they were excited to have young teachers from a faraway land teach them new things in different ways. Next, the student-centred methodologies of the NU teachers contrasted with the more teacher-centred norm to which the learners were accustomed, and also had positive pedagogical implications, as I shall demonstrate. Finally, since language is central to thinking, and therefore also to communicating and learning, and since the LoLT from Gr. 4 is English (a second or foreign language to most, if not all, the Phepo teachers and learners), it was perhaps inevitable that the partnership would have a language and literacy dimension. However, since the 2006 project centred on the library, literacy became the overriding focus with significant long-term benefits for the learners.

4.1.1.1 Novelty

Aspects that struck interviewees as novel included the cross-cultural exposure, the interesting lesson content, and the interpersonal contacts that the partnership offered learners.

Most interviewees felt it was beneficial for the learners to meet people from another culture, particularly since many have never left the confines of their immediate community. Of the Gr. 1s, one teacher said:

> There the learners see a white teacher for the first time and they become so excited, can you see that? And they **listen** (IE-10:23).

The NU teachers mentioned the cross-cultural benefits, too, adding that the partnership also probably enhanced the learners' self-esteem, since the overseas visitors were here 'just for them' (IN-27:15).

Similarly, most interviewees mentioned the interesting content of the lessons. One Gr. 5 learner explained: 'We like them because they teach us things that we don't know,' (I5-00:16) and a Gr. 7 elaborated:

> It was great. We are glad to have them back because… each time when they come, they teach us something different that we don't do in school (I7-3:37).

To this learner, the novelty of new teachers and different activities heightened her interest in the lessons and ensured a higher level of participation and perhaps also of subsequent recall.

Some of the highlights the learners mentioned were simple activities like painting, dancing, and making percussion instruments and puppets (see Plate 3), which involved more organization than expertise. On the other hand, others required specialist knowledge. For example, Beth had some musical background, so she undertook to teach 60 Gr. 7s to play the recorder, a task which entailed not only skill, but fortitude and humour! The students also thoroughly enjoyed their practical Science classes: the Gr. 5s studied the water cycle and the Gr. 7s investigated carbohydrates (see Plate 4). The hands-on component of all the lessons ensured a lasting impact, as exemplified in this Gr. 7 extract:

> I liked… testing which food had starch – we tested salt, cheese and a potato – then we got the result that the potato's the one that has starch because they pour iodine on the food and they saw that when the food has starch it turns black, and when it doesn't it just stays red (I7-0:18).

Impressively, the interview occurred two weeks after the lesson, yet this learner still remembered all the details – and the new vocabulary.

Finally, it should be noted that, with the exception of the foods that were tested, no supplies had to be purchased for any of these activities. The school already had all the necessary materials (paint, brushes, fabric, yarn, 50 recorders, science kits and chemicals, etc.), yet the learners had never used any of them, either because the teachers were unaware of their existence, or because they did not know how to use them. This theme recurs in Sect. 4.1.2.

Although the learners had less time with the visitors this year, they obviously had good memories from 2005 and hoped to establish a similar rapport. Some came to the library at lunchtime to ask after individuals they remembered, and one afternoon about 20 Gr. 5s gave the visitors an impromptu demonstration of the gumboot dance. Thus, it seems that the children viewed the young teachers as approachable and fair game for a bit of fun. However, it is also clear that the library project took its toll on this relationship. As one Gr. 7 learner explained:

> Last year… they would like sit with us and tell us about over there, but this year we were like - oh, they are just like our teachers… we couldn't just sit with them and talk to them (I7-4:50) .

This suggests that the learners want knowledge beyond the official curriculum; they are curious about other people and places, and informal exchanges outside the classroom setting allow them to explore these aspects. While they were delighted with their new library, they were nonetheless disappointed that their time with the NU teachers had been curtailed. Hence, besides the intended benefits of enriched curriculum and shared teaching practice, a hidden benefit which the children perhaps value even more highly is the sense of connectivity to a broader world, one to which they do not usually have access, but which is brought into their lives by the visitors.



Plate 3: Finger puppets

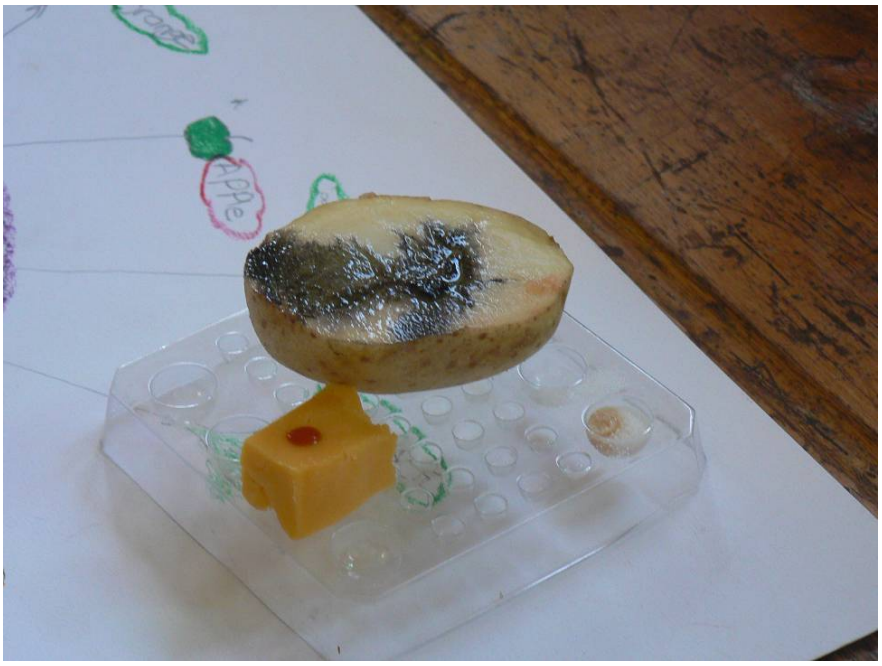


Plate 4: Testing for starch

4.1.1.2 Teaching methodology

With regard to teaching methodology, interviewees felt that learners benefited from the NU teachers' student-centred approach, evident in their planning, their teaching, and their interactions with the learners.

It is clear that Phepo teachers are trying to comply with the OBE requirements of group work and discovery-based learning, some more successfully than others. Thus, all desks are arranged in pods, and some teachers encourage exploratory talk, but the classes are often so overcrowded[14] that they cannot easily move between groups to monitor progress or facilitate learning. Similarly, some teachers send their learners to the media centre to do research, but this is often pointless since reference materials are limited and not yet catalogued, and unfocussed internet searches generate far too many hits, some of dubious quality and most at an inaccessible reading level. As a consequence, most teachers revert to the authoritarian model of teacher-talk and triadic initiation-response-evaluation dialogue (McKay and Chick 2001), and the learners are passive throughout most of the school day. Hence, as Adler and Reed (2002) also found, the pedagogical ideals of learner-centred teaching are thwarted as teachers take up the form but not the substance of the new methodologies.

It is no surprise, therefore, that the children responded enthusiastically to the NU teachers' integrative approach, interactive teaching methods and intentional scaffolding along the mode continuum from informal oral exploration toward the more formal discipline-specific discourses of school (Gibbons 2003). One of the Phepo teachers who worked most closely with the visitors was Sipho, an intermediate Science teacher. He remarked on their meticulous planning, in particular their attention to learning outcomes, pacing and differentiation, all of which reflected a clarity of purpose that benefited learners (IS-02:40). In the lesson I observed (FN-27/07/06), the NU teachers involved learners in the following range of activities:

- reviewing previous concepts by creating mind-maps of foods containing starch (see Plate 5);
- testing various foods for the presence of starch;
- tabulating results in words or pictures; and

[14] Classes usually have between 25-30 learners, but classes are doubled when teachers are absent.

- consolidating new concepts and vocabulary by means of a participatory True/False quiz.

Thus, throughout the lesson, all students were actively engaged in constructing new knowledge through carefully sequenced exploration, integration and consolidation.

Phepo teachers in both the Intermediate and Foundation Phases also commended the NU teachers for modifying their teaching to accommodate individual needs and learning styles, and two incidents highlight the resulting benefits to learners. The first occurred in Sally's Gr. 1 numeracy class during which she pointed to digits on a number line, and the children held up the corresponding number of fingers (see Plate 6). One boy at the front was not participating despite encouragement. From the back of the class, the teacher announced that 'he never responds because he's weak at Maths', but Sally knelt next to him and worked one-on-one with him until he understood, then returned to working with the whole class. For the rest of the lesson, the little boy not only joined in, but most of the time his responses were correct (FN-01/08/06). He simply needed the individual attention. In my subsequent interview with the Foundation Focus Group, the teacher tellingly observed:

> And she also involved the one who doesn't talk in class, the one who we thought that they can't do it. But with Sally, I saw that they can do it… Yes, they can do it, these kids (IF-12:40).

Certainly, in the short-term, this child benefited from Sally's efforts, both in terms of conceptual understanding and self-esteem. Likewise, if the teacher takes her realisation seriously and modifies her practice, all the children in her class stand to benefit in the long-term.

The second incident occurred when Hannah taught one Gr. 5 English class, and then Alice taught the second class, adapting Hannah's ideas. The lesson included a story about a huge pumpkin that required the entire family to harvest it. Hannah had found cardboard cut-outs of the characters, so individual children could role-play the parts while the teacher read the story aloud from a Big Book. The contrast between the two teachers' lessons was remarkable. The boy who played the farmer in Alice's class was an accomplished performer: not only was he obviously enjoying the limelight himself,

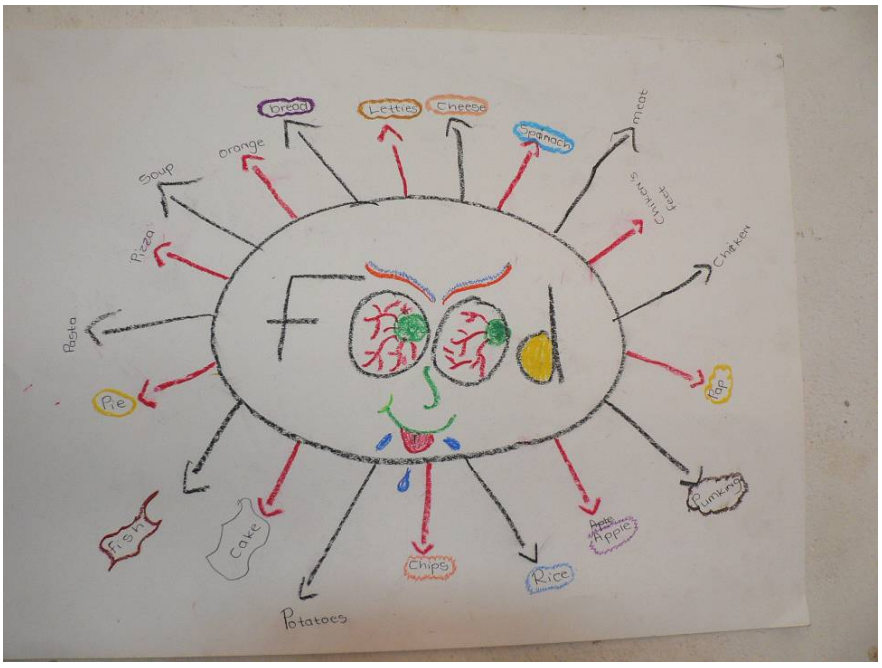


Plate 5: Gr. 7 review of foods providing energy



Plate 6: Sally's Gr. 1 numeracy lesson

but his enthusiasm animated the rest of the cast too, and the audience became more engaged and responsive, too. When asked to comment on the experience, Alice said:

> That was beautiful – it was beautiful… Did you see this boy who was very like a comedian? He was driving the group. That boy is on the list of the retained[15]. You know, he enjoyed himself, he was participating – he was engaged. That gave me a wake-up to say we're killing this boy because every time we want him to write, every time we want him to listen – and if you involve him in all these things, that's how he learns (IT-19:45).

Cope and Kalantzis's (2000) multiliteracies theory incorporates 'six design elements in the meaning-making process: those of Linguistic Meaning, Visual Meaning, Audio Meaning, Gestural Meaning, Spatial Meaning, and the Multimodal patterns of meaning that relate the first five modes of meaning to each other' (p. 7). In the literacy event described above, all these modes were tapped and this red-flagged boy emerged as a capable learner and a charismatic leader. Again, in the short-term, taking the lead role was undoubtedly good for this boy's self-esteem: he had hitherto been constructed as a failure, yet engaging his preferred learning styles revealed his potential, to himself and to his peers and teacher. In the long-term, Alice's new insight holds benefits for all her learners, and in her capacity as an administrator, she has the potential to influence her colleagues' practice, too.

Finally, a number of interviewees commented on how the NU teachers interacted with the learners. The visitors were taken aback by how sternly the local teachers treated the learners:

> In the classes I've observed, there doesn't seem to be a lot of positive encouragement – it's all very shouting at them and telling them that they're naughty, or they've done this wrong, or they've done that wrong (IN-28:03).

By contrast, the NU teachers felt they used more positive reinforcement in the classroom:

> I feel like all of us have been so positive... [The learners are] proud of their work and they're showing off – like their pictures today and they all wanted their photos taken... So it's quite nice – their work's being praised and put up on the walls (IN-27:42).

[15] This suggests that his academic performance does not meet expectations and he is likely to fail.

It appears that learners' work is seldom displayed in classrooms, apparently because in the past, work has been vandalised, although during the course of the NU visit, there was no evidence of such behaviour. Besides the aesthetics of brightening the classrooms, there are sound pedagogical reasons for displaying student work. Firstly, students' self-esteem is enhanced when their efforts are thus validated. Secondly, whereas most classroom teaching taps linguistic intelligence, the visual displays appeal to spatial intelligence, thereby further consolidating learning. According with Gardner's (1993) theory of multiple intelligences, students are more likely to be successful when instructional activities engage their preferred learning modalities. Thirdly, and especially important for African learners who are required to master abstract material in a foreign language, visual aids review and reinforce concepts. Given the tangible benefits of creating educational displays, Phepo teachers might consider pre-empting the vandalism by explicitly teaching learners to respect each other's work.

In her research, Moulton (1997) also described differences in teacher-student interactions. For example, in a formative study of South African instructional materials, researchers observed:

> The materials … encouraged students to think creatively about [science] and to depend less on the teachers' directions. Yet because teachers were not skilled in these methods, they often failed to exploit the materials and continued to use more teacher-centered questions and directions. For example, they looked for "correct" answers rather than listening to students' ideas and promoting meaningful discussion (p. 7).

Similarly, NU interviewees noticed differences in questioning techniques. Whereas the Phepo teachers typically posed closed questions, the NU teachers tended to ask more open-ended questions. As one NU teacher explained:

> [the learners are] used to the teacher saying it, they repeat it, the teacher says it, they repeat it, [so] actually trying to get the children to talk is quite difficult (IH-11:22).

Also, she noted that, whereas she would typically explore incorrect responses in an attempt to develop the learners' understanding, the local teachers would often flatly reject them with no explanation or clarification.

> I think there's a big cultural divide between when a child says something, you know if they get it wrong, we say good try, but no, that's not quite right, or have a think again… but they get shouted at and told, no, that's not right (IH-11:33).

The teacher-centred approach promotes neither individual initiative nor intellectual curiosity, and it entrenches the status quo of teacher as sole arbiter of knowledge. On the other hand, the student-centred approach encourages learners to explore multiple perspectives, and the power relations in the classroom become more fluid as students take on the role of expert advocates for alternate views.

It could be argued that the disciplinary discrepancies merely reflect cultural differences in child-rearing. Yet, when asked what they liked about the visit, the children said, '[The NU teachers] don't like to shout,' (I5-04:30) which suggests that, whatever the cultural norms, the gentler teacher-learner interaction style was a welcome change. In addition, in Krashen's (1987) terms, the learners' affective filters would have been lowered by the non-threatening approach and so learning would have been enhanced.

4.1.1.3 Literacy

As already mentioned, in the process of organizing the library, the NU team discovered a trove of donated treasures which they were determined to share with the learners. The local teachers, however, expressed misgivings about the children handling the books because, like the children Heath (1999), Gee (1996) and Wells (1986) studied, their home literacy practices include little, if any, prior exposure to books – few own books and rituals like the bedtime story do not feature in their homes. One intermediate teacher related this incident:

> Another learner from my class she cut pictures from a reader I gave them to read. She can't read, she tore off all the pictures. She doesn't know the meaning of a book… How to teach the importance of a book? (IR-07:45)

As Wells (1986, p. 139) observes, by the time they enter school, many working-class children will never have had a story read to them, yet they are expected to compete with middle-class children who will have already accumulated six thousand book and story experiences! In mastering secondary Discourses, Gee (1996) believes that:

> [learners must be apprenticed] into the social practices through scaffolded and supported interaction with people who have already mastered the Discourse… If you

> have no access to the social practice, you don't get in the Discourse – you don't have it (p. 139).

Luke (1999) elaborates:

> Literacy education is *not* about skill development, not about deep competence. It *is* about the institutional shaping of social practices and cultural resources, about inducting successive generations into particular cultural, normative ways of handling texts, and about access to technologies and artifacts (e.g., writing, the Internet) and to the social institutions where these tools and artifacts are used (e.g., workplaces, civic institutions).

Clearly, to master schooled discourse, learners need ongoing 'situated practice' and 'overt instruction' (Cope and Kalantzis 2000). To this end, Hannah used worksheets to contrast "good" and "bad" ways to treat books in her library orientations. Once the ground rules were established, she invited classes to the library to share picture books which she had carefully selected to ensure comprehension, build confidence and heighten enjoyment (see Plate 7).

The learners' eagerness to embrace new learning opportunities was immediately apparent. On one occasion with Gr. 7s, even when Hannah turned on the television, not a single head lifted from the picture books they were reading (FN-31/07/06). On another occasion, this time with Gr. 6s, when the bell rang at the end of the day, Hannah first dismissed all learners wearing grey, then those with jackets. Before she announced the next group, learners were removing their ties and sweaters, to avoid dismissal (FN-01/08/06). The library project introduced many learners for the first time to the world of leisure reading – whether of fact or fantasy – and these learners, like the Gr. 5s mentioned by Sethole, just 'want to **ree-ead**' (IP-07:10). It is the SMT's express intention to timetable a library period into the school day (FN-14/09/06). If this in fact materialises, it will further develop, formalise and consolidate the literacy practices at the school.

Until the NU visit, the library had been more of a showpiece than a functional resource, partly because the resources had not been sorted and catalogued, and partly because teachers were concerned that the learners would damage the books. However, as Gee (1996, p. 145) notes, to master the prestigious school Discourse, non-mainstream children need 'active apprenticeships in academic social practice'. By implication,

then, withholding access to the library resources effectively denies learners the very opportunities they need for future success. The NU teachers began to address these concerns by organising the materials, and teaching the learners some basic rules for handling books. Perhaps more importantly, they created a space dedicated to developing and nurturing literacy practices, and the learners not only complied, but transformed these opportunities, as shown in the following literacy event.

Anne, Abby, Erin and Beth had been making puppets with the Gr. 6s, whom I then photographed with their finished products. After lunch, two boys came to the library for their photograph. They had not only created puppets, but also a theatre, and they honoured me with a short debut performance in English. They then usurped Hannah's stage, and gave her audience of Gr. 2s an impromptu performance in Setswana which evoked delighted squeals from the youngsters (FN-02/08/06). While the puppet-making activity itself was for Art and Culture, it afforded opportunities for a range of surprise literacy events which the learners initiated themselves: many learners spontaneously created stories about their puppets during the class (I6-00:19); the two boys went further by adding the theatre, and then modified their show to accommodate a broader audience (see Plate 8). This transformation reflects the boys' own goals and values, and exemplifies the best practice of the multiliteracies approach (Cope and Kalantzis 2000). The puppet show drew on the boys' multilingual 'funds of knowledge' (Moll et al 1992), and legitimated the literacy practices of the wider community (Barton and Hamilton 1998). Also, the combination of visual, verbal, oral, creative and performative elements ensured that the show would appeal to the multiple intelligences (Gardner 1993) of the audience members. Finally, the entire event represents a significant shift in power relations on two fronts: firstly, by affording the learners the rare opportunity to direct instruction, and secondly, by validating their home language in the prestigious educational setting that, according to McKay and Chick (2001), ordinarily only sanctions its use outside of the classroom.

Although Hannah's original intention was to promote the RealeBooks writing programme, it will by now be apparent that this was sidelined by the library project. However, she and Lawrence, the computer teacher, did introduce it to the Gr. 6s who quickly grasped its main elements. The programme itself is very user-friendly, yet the activity was challenging for these learners, firstly, because they do not have access to



Plate 7: Keen readers share a picture book



Plate 8: Gr. 6 puppet show

computers at home, so their keyboarding skills are rudimentary; secondly, their English fluency is still fairly limited; and thirdly, they seldom compose their own original texts. As one NU teacher noted:

> [T]he children don't do writing – they copy – they don't do any of their own writing and they have no idea how to do any of their own (IH-19:26).

Adler and Reed (2002) also observed this phenomenon. They suggest that the advocacy of informal exploratory talk is overshadowing the importance of developing formal discourses, including the writing of extended texts in the English language class (p. 91).

Despite these drawbacks, the excitement of producing their own books was a powerful motivator, and the learners' enjoyment was evident. With Lawrence's guidance, they learned how to import photographs of their neighbourhood, and then they worked at describing the scene in their own words. The literacy affordances are clear: the appeal of computer technology facilitates short-term writing and reading opportunities, and presents potential benefits for the long-term too. In one study of computer-assisted language learning, Warschauer (1996) found that:

> [EFL students] feel they can learn faster, become more creative, and write better essays. They feel they have more control of their learning and more opportunities to practice English.

Although the school printer was temporarily out of order, once learners can actually hold their own books, their authorship will be more tangible, and, I suggest, their motivation heightened. Lawrence has even loftier ambitions:

> [It] will really help the learners because some are creative and therefore if we use the programme, then we can get some authors… [We can] have some copies in the library… so others can read what [they] wrote (IL-05:30).

Fortunately, the school is well-resourced, and Lawrence is an inspirational mentor, so the writing programme will likely be used to good effect.

In summary, then, benefits to the learners include a broadening of their horizons through exposure to novel experiences and cross-cultural influences, alternative and

more student-centred teaching methodologies, and a wide range of engaging and personally motivating literacy events.

4.1.2 Benefits to Phepo Teachers

The benefits to Phepo teachers relate primarily to general methodology and literacy teaching, access to school resources and cross-cultural contact.

In their interviews, all participating Phepo teachers mentioned aspects of the NU teachers' methodology that impressed them. Firstly, many appreciated the NU teachers' use of existing school resources. For instance, they expressed surprise when shown the art supplies, math manipulatives, bulletin board displays and educational posters, all of which had been stored for years, but to which they had not hitherto had access. It appears that teachers were not told of available teaching aids because the school lacked routines to track issued materials, and because teachers do not know how to use them. Hence, Sibongile had had no personal prior experience with dominoes and therefore, even when shown the multiple sets, could not anticipate their Maths application until Sally demonstrated it. Likewise, the English teachers appreciated Hannah's demonstration of the effective use of picture books in literacy activities, and can perhaps now begin to imagine opportunities for integrating them into their own lessons in future. To paraphrase Moulton's (1997, p. 17) findings on effective textbook use, teachers' use of teaching aids in general is influenced by their own experience, training and support, and maximizing their use requires improving teachers' practice. A final consideration with regard to resource utilization seems to be that "use" and "use up" are conflated in the minds of the SMT. Hence, provided the storerooms are full, the school is well-resourced, but once the supplies are used, the resource base will be depleted and the school thereby somehow impoverished. Hopefully, this myth has been debunked by the NU demonstration of how significantly classroom practice can be enriched by the judicious use of teaching aids.

Secondly, Sipho noted that the NU teachers' planning accounted for diverse learning styles, and that assessment was woven through the entire lesson. These were both aspects for which he had specifically sought guidance, and he requested copies of their lesson plans, with the intention of modifying his own accordingly. He was also keen to learn alternatives to the conventional pen-and-paper tests, and was impressed by the

variety of assessment methods the NU teachers used in the Gr. 7 lesson on starch testing: graphic organizers for review, concept checking throughout the lesson, and the interactive True/False quiz which was an engaging and non-threatening way to consolidate new material. However, in order to obviate the uneven form-not-substance take-up observed by Adler and Reed (2002), explicit and repeated clarification of the rationale behind these new methods may be necessary, an ideal unlikely to be realised in a brief two weeks, but one that may be achievable with successive interventions over the three-year partnership.

Thirdly, Phepo teachers and the SMT appreciated the NU teachers' assistance in sorting the science equipment into topic-specific classroom kits and their demonstrations of how these can be used. Both Phepo Science teachers mentioned the resultant high level of student engagement, and Lawrence also commented on the interactive teaching aid the NU teachers drew on a whiteboard to illustrate the water cycle to the Gr. 5s:

> That was a beautiful picture according to me because the learners had to label the process as it happens (IL-02:46).

He added that, during the 2005 NU visit, he had learned how to make teaching aids like flip charts and reading cards, and had continued to develop his skills in this area (IL-00:53). Thus, he was perhaps in a stronger position this time to assess the quality of the aids the NU teachers created, and the skill with which they implemented them. This points to the cumulative benefits to be gained from an ongoing partnership since change is incremental, and teachers need time and support as they incorporate new ideas into their practice.

Several other intermediate Phepo teachers also felt they had benefited from observing how the visitors used teaching aids, encouraged learner participation and integrated themes and concepts across learning areas in their lessons. Alice, Head of Curriculum, observed:

> What actually you people are doing it's what we're expected to do. We are supposed to interact with children – that's what the curriculum say – we have to take children step-by-step, but the problem is at the back of our head we're thinking of curriculum and catching up which is unfair (IT-20:00).

She then reflected on the impact of the 'wake-up' incident described earlier, involving the retained boy in Hannah's "Pumpkin Play". Without question, this talented teacher benefited from her team-teaching experience with Hannah, which the other NU teachers agreed exemplified best practice:

> When Hannah went and taught with Alice and then Alice taught that lesson again with a different group, that's proper – that's how it should be working (IN–12:43)

In their study of the teachers in the FDE programme, Adler and Reed (2002) noted that the impact of INSET opportunities varied across individuals, and also found a correlation between meaningful take-up of new methodologies and 'further qualifications, reflection and learner-centred teaching' (p. 114). This was also the case at Phepo: Sipho, Lawrence and Alice all displayed a high degree of commitment to professional growth – all are furthering their studies, all had enjoyed working with the NU teachers in 2005, and all welcomed the opportunity to participate again in 2006. Given their openness to new ideas and practices, it is hardly surprising that they described the partnership so positively.

Sally had no less of an impact on the Foundation Phase teachers with whom she worked. One experienced teacher admitted that, in teaching early reading skills, she had always used the names of the alphabet letters, rather than their phonetic sounds. After watching Sally's lesson with her Gr. 2 learners, she realised the benefits of teaching sound-symbol correspondence, and she intended to modify her practice in future (IE-05:00).

For the Gr. 1 literacy/numeracy class described earlier, Sally had set up activity stations with jigsaw puzzles, dominoes and other educational games and activities. Reflecting on that lesson, Sibongile observed:

> All I can say is this I've learnt a lot of things that I was not aware of… I thought maybe there's no discipline in my class, but then she explained to me that they just have to explore… so they were busy assisting one another how to put the puzzles, how to add on the dominoes… I saw that I was making a mistake about shouting to them telling them to be quiet – I just have to leave them to do whatever they want to do.
>
> So what I've learnt, you know sometimes you don't have to be harsh to those learners – we have to leave them to do things on their own. That's what I've learnt, that's what I liked about Sally. She gave them the challenge and she just assisting and leave them,

> you see – she let them to go to another group and leave that group – you know, they were all working, working, and working, so they just they want her to come and look at what they've done, you see.
>
> So I've learnt a lot, a lot, a lot about this small children. And what she said, she said, "It's normal for them, they're busy learning – they have to make some mistakes and correct themselves. It is normal." (IF-05:58ff)

In a brief 90 minutes, Sibongile not only absorbed some practical teaching strategies for integrating across the curriculum, facilitating group work and enabling student choice, but she also realised that, far from warranting reprimands, mistakes and exploratory talk are central to learning. Her extended reflection is honest, insightful and sincere, and this experience surely marks a turning-point for both her and her learners.

Social theories of learning shed light on the potential pedagogical benefits of such collaborations. Vygotsky theorised that all learning is dialogic and is mediated by More Knowledgeable Others (MKO). In teaching partnerships, the MKO may be a more experienced or qualified colleague; in the classroom, the MKO may be a teacher, other adult or more competent peer. Wenger (1998) describes the reciprocal relationship between mentors and learners as a 'community of practice', and notes that:

> in spite of curriculum, discipline, and exhortation, the learning that is most personally transformative [in schools] turns out to be the learning that involves membership in these communities of practice (p. 6).

Like Vygotsky, Lave and Wenger (1991) acknowledge the central role of experts in facilitating novices' gradual shift from the periphery to the centre, where they in turn mentor other newcomers. Hence, in a professional partnership such as that between Phepo and NU, as teachers integrate new ideas and methodologies into their practice, they, in turn, can mentor their colleagues, ideally creating a practising community of lifelong learners.

While the Phepo teachers and the SMT were convinced of the benefits they had gained from the visit, their NU counterparts were more ambivalent about their long-term impact on existing teaching practices. In general, they hoped that the local teachers may have gained something from team-teaching, if only from enjoying the lessons themselves, but long-term take-up remained to be seen. As one remarked:

> I think some of the Phepo teachers **have** [benefited], the ones who are interested in their teaching, but again it's a two-way process… You can take a horse to water, but you can't make it drink (IH-11:00).

The wisdom of this observation is evidenced by the contrasting reactions of the two Phepo teachers who observed Hannah's "Pumpkin Play" lesson with the Gr. 5s: whereas Rachel doubted whether the learners had benefited at all from the partnership (IR-05:35), Alice was inspired to try out the ideas, immediately recognised the positive effects on the learners, and began to reflect on ways she could modify her own practice to support student learning more effectively.

The differential uptake notwithstanding, the partnership provides significant opportunities for professional growth. As Wenger (1998) observes, since learning involves primarily active participation in social communities, rather than discrete bits of information stored in brain, those interested in facilitating INSET must provide:

> inventive ways of engaging students in meaningful practices, of providing access to resources that enhance their participation, of opening their horizons so they can put themselves on learning trajectories they can identify with, and of involving them in actions, discussions, and reflections that make a difference to the communities they value (p. 10).

Given its structure and intent, the Phepo-NU partnership provides many such opportunities for professional development that is both relevant and responsive to the specific needs of the partners.

With regard to literacy benefits, Phepo teachers agreed that the library is an asset to the entire school community. Sipho pointed proudly to the Science section, saying, 'That's my corner,', and on each of my subsequent visits to the school, teachers have come into the library for resources. Most recently, teachers took their classes into the library during their school-wide focus on LO5, the Reading and Viewing learning outcome (FN-14/09/06), so the SMT continues to show commitment to ensuring that the resource is utilised now that it is available.

It is clear from many of the comments that the recommissioning of the library has realised a dream cherished since its construction in 2003. Sethole says:

> Maybe because my vision, my focus, my worry all the time was the library – I'm so so excited because today my dream has come true... The Nottingham teachers have really played a very very important role in establishing our library (IP-4:30).

Alice concurred, saying:

> The work that has been done in the library – I think that it's a remarkable work, really, and it has been motivating, and we could see that all is possible. You see, it's there and it will be used, and it has been an eye-opener (IT–08:30).

Besides supporting their curricular needs, Lawrence suggested that teachers will be able to use the library for their own research (IL-09:40), and Sethole envisions the library eventually being used by other adult learners too:

> If at the end of the day, we could get the local community coming to sit there over weekends to come and read – we've got so many students that are studying distance education – Unisa, Pretoria University – that's a facility we could utilise for the students (IP–07:52).

Thus, the NU project has provided the tangible benefit of a functional library, and has engendered potential benefits for those beyond the immediate Phepo community.

Another literacy benefit for the teachers relates to the RealeBooks programme introduced by Hannah. Lawrence, Alice and Thabo, the deputy principal, were all impressed by how easily the children mastered its components, and could see its classroom application, not only for literacy teaching, but also for report writing in the content areas. However, it was the benefit to Lawrence's new sense of himself as an author that is particularly striking. Before the first lesson with the children, Hannah had shown Lawrence how to use the programme, and he had produced his own booklet. Even as a computer-literate adult, the experience was novel, exhilarating and empowering:

> I think I should be very much grateful to Hannah because she taught me how to write a book. I did not even know how to write a book (IL-05:20).

He was so proud of his first publication that he invited colleagues into the computer lab to show them the programme. His firsthand experience enabled him to see the potential benefits to both teachers and learners, and his enthusiasm was so infectious that other teachers became intrigued too. Of his orientation, Thabo subsequently noted, 'So even

myself I went there to take a look at some of the things. I managed to grasp a lot' (IT-11:57). This demonstrates the ripple effect of benefits from a single successful partnership experience.

The sense of connectivity mentioned earlier is also significant for the teachers. One of the university coordinators observed:

> I think the teachers benefit from the sense they have of contact with the rest of the world. You know, there are some people who never go out of Atteridgeville. They don't have transport – they don't get out of that town very often. If the world comes to Atteridgeville, I think it's quite exciting for them… So it's about connectivity – connecting people to the rest of the world (IJ-19:33).

Several Phepo teachers have taken the email addresses of their 2006 NU partners (e.g. IS-05:59), and, in one notable instance, an intermediate teacher has maintained contact with some of the NU teachers from 2005, too. Some of the local teachers also expressed the desire 'to go that side' (IF-17:03) to visit their partners' schools. While this suggestion will be more fully explored in Sect. 4.3.1, it certainly confirms that, like the learners, they yearn for exposure to a wider world.

In summary, then, the teaching practices of the Phepo participants may have been enhanced by shared lesson planning and team-teaching, access to new teaching resources, and demonstrations of how these can best be used. In addition, they also have the literacy benefits of a functional and well-resourced library for both classroom and personal research, and some may integrate the RealeBooks programme into their curricula. Finally, informal exchanges with the NU visitors bridged the Centre-Margin divide, and increased the Phepo teachers' sense of connection with the wider world. All of these benefits are potentially significant, although, as with all INSET, the full impact will depend on each individual's receptivity and motivation to grow professionally.

4.1.3 Benefits to NU Teachers

The benefits of the partnership to the NU teachers are more difficult to quantify because they spent half of their time sorting materials, rather than interfacing directly with the Phepo community. However, the main benefits relate to self-efficacy, teambuilding and cross-cultural contact.

The most obvious benefit to the NU teachers appears to be an enhanced sense of self-efficacy. Although hardly a glamorous assignment for newly-qualified professionals, the library project gave the entire team a great deal of satisfaction – they know that their efforts will have a lasting impact on student learning at Phepo. They also expressed pride in their ability to adapt to teaching conditions very different from those to which they were accustomed, viz. large class sizes, low literacy levels, and limited resources. In a science lesson on particle theory, the NU teachers issued the Phepo learners with oil burners so that they could boil water. Abby said:

> At home you go, 'Oh no, there're 29 of them and how do you organise them in the room with all this equipment, and we've only got 45 minutes… and you kinda feel can you trust the class? And it's like [here] you did a practical in a room that there's no space whatsoever with 60 kids and they **all** managed to **behave** (IN-30:42).

While relieved that there had been no mishaps, they also all agreed that classroom discipline was paramount. Erin observed:

> That shows the importance, though, of the behaviour and the respect thing 'cos the kids generally here have that in place – they wouldn't mess around and they wouldn't be silly, you know, so it does enable that. It reinforces the need for good classroom mangagement (IN-31:05).

Although the NU teachers themselves felt their lesson had been successful, it did raise some ethical concerns which will be discussed more fully in Sect. 4.3.2. Nevertheless, overall they met the challenges with enthusiasm and equanimity, and emerged with a heightened sense of their ability to cope with the unexpected. Like the 2005 NU teachers (interview with Thomson and Hall, Janks March 2006), they too had learned 'to think on their feet' (IN-34:33), and recognised that this would be an asset in their careers. Finally, they had enjoyed the opportunities to work with younger children and 'to see outside [their] own subjects' and Anne, in particular, had loved the art activities with the Gr. 5s (IN-34:24). These benefits are consistent with Billig's (2000) review of

current research into quality service learning programmes. Among others, she identified the following outcomes which clearly also accrued to the NU participants: an increase in their sense of self-esteem and self-efficacy; a positive effect on their interpersonal development and their ability to relate to culturally diverse groups; a greater acceptance of cultural diversity; and more frequent reflection on and discussion of the best ways to promote student learning.

The unique potential of service learning to address issues of race and cultural diversity in positive ways is documented in a project sponsored by the W. K. Kellogg Foundation (Weah, Simmons and Hall 2000, p. 673-675). The report concluded that service-learning:

- motivates participants to learn about the perspectives of others;
- promotes reflection and discussion of racial, cultural, and other differences which 'are keys to actually changing long-term attitudes and behaviour';
- develops respect for diversity as participants confront cross-cultural tensions and strive to find commonalities; and
- encourages all stakeholders to participate in conflict resolution.

Based on these findings, the service learning between Phepo and NU affords an excellent opportunity to bridge social, political and cultural differences in a reciprocal partnership in which power is equitably shared between participants.

Initially, the biggest challenge to the NU teachers was teamwork. They all had strong leadership qualities, and their prior teaching experience had not prepared them to share space and decision-making to this extent. In addition, they did not arrive with a coherent plan for creating a functional library, so the crucial task of establishing a common vision occurred concurrently with its realisation. Inevitably, therefore, there were disagreements about product – visualising what a functional library looks like in the Phepo context – and process – allocating tasks, deciding which books to keep and which to discard, identifying subject areas and finding adequate shelf space for them. Nevertheless, by the end of the partnership, they were proud of their ability to transcend personal differences in order to accomplish a common goal, and all agreed that they had learned a great deal about themselves and others. Beth summarised the group's sentiments thus:

> Personally, I've benefited… I've definitely learnt to keep my mouth shut and get on with what I want to do. And also working with people – like I've never team-taught and it's been great working with Erin and learning from everybody (IN-31:30).

Clearly, even in a brief fortnight, these teachers had experienced the value of teamwork, tact and compromise, and these strengths will serve them well in their day-to-day teaching. Research documents similar interpersonal benefits: after engaging in service-learning, participants typically perceive themselves to be more socially competent, and report enhanced group cohesiveness and more positive peer relations (Billig 2000).

With respect to service learning, mutual benefits are a central defining feature and Weah, Simmons and Hall (2000, p. 675) caution that '[t]o limit our thinking about service-learning to constructing "helping" models is to diminish the reciprocal power of service-learning for all parties involved'. Hence, it is important to note that, besides learning to work with each other, the NU teachers also established a sense of collegiality with their Phepo partners. Sipho thought that Beth and Erin had gained insights into the South African education system, through shared lesson planning and team-teaching with him (IS-1:20), and they, in turn, acknowledged that they had observed strategies that they would implement in their own teaching:

> I've seen things that I want to take back that I've seen teachers do… like Sipho has the kids clapping when one of the kids comes up to the board… and there's a really positive atmosphere in that class (IN-15:20).

Finally, the cross-cultural benefits were mentioned by several interviewees. Although most of the NU teachers had travelled, and, in some cases, taught, abroad before, this opportunity broadened their perspectives on the socio-political legacies of post-colonial countries, and of the unique challenges faced by South African teachers in disadvantaged schools. Their time was limited, but they visited a few other Atteridgeville schools and met with another group of UK volunteers, so were able to gain some perspective on how Phepo compares to other schools. Significantly, Abby observed:

> Lots of people said to us, 'Why are you at Phepo? They've got so much.' Yeah, they've got resources, but they haven't got what's important (IN-44:30).

Thus they saw that, despite Phepo being under-resourced by UK standards, by local standards, it is regarded as a model school. Their visit highlighted some of the political issues around donor funding, too: they realised that donated materials need to be judiciously selected for the specific context and in consultation with the intended recipients, and that merely donating resources does not guarantee utilisation or upliftment. As Billig (2000) notes, participants in high-quality service-learning develop more sophisticated understandings of sociohistorical contexts, are more politically and ethically aware, and are more likely to consider how to effect social change. Thus, at Phepo, 'what's important', as both Adler and Reed (2002) and Moulton (1997) confirm, is teacher training to ensure that contextually appropriate resources are effectively used to promote optimal student learning.

4.1.4 Other Benefits

Thus far, I have discussed the benefits to the primary beneficiaries, the Phepo community and the NU teachers. There were, however, some peripheral, but no less significant, benefits to the Phepo SMT, the university coordinators and myself which deserve brief mention.

Firstly, the SMT acknowledged the value they attach to all opportunities for professional development for the teachers. Sethole explains her reasons for the partnership:

> We are from the disadvantaged community, we have been trained minimally, and I still feel we need lots of training… to improve the education of our learners (IP-13:36).

At first glance, her comment may be construed as the internalised inferiority of the colonial subject. Yet, by participating in the partnership with NU, Sethole has found a proactive way of dealing with a problem which poses serious challenges to South African education. Her agency exemplifies praxis: action as a result of reflection (Hinchey 1998, p. 45), and reflects a post-colonial subject intent on addressing local needs in a constructive manner.

While INSET is her primary goal, Sethole acknowledges that 'change is something that is very difficult… change is something that you take in piecemeal (IP-14:04)' and she

therefore feels that the annual NU visits are a non-threatening way of providing her staff with gradual exposure to alternative methodologies. Asked if she would seek to continue the partnership, she concluded:

> I'd really recommend that we have the Nottingham students… because they are forever sharing information with us – they are forever bringing us new ideas – **their** expertise we really need, especially coming to the classrooms (IP-14:28).

Clearly, she sees this as an opportunity to enhance the quality of teaching and, therefore also of learning, at her school.

Secondly, Hannah was pleased both with the teachers' and learners' initial responses to the RealeBook programme and with the library project:

> You know, we bought the carpet for the library which is lovely… and the room is **beautiful** and it could be **such** a good resource (IH-14:35).

Furthermore, she believes the cause to be so worthwhile that she has indicated her willingness to return in 2007 (IH-15:12), with a view to furthering the 2006 literacy initiatives. Her specific recommendations in this regard will be further elaborated in Sect. 4.3.2.

Janks expressed appreciation for the additional insights she gained into the day-to-day functioning of the school. Although she is aware of many of the challenges, she found the third-party perspectives 'salutary', saying they kept her from lapsing into an 'I-understand complacency' (IJ-27:02).

Finally, this project afforded me the rare opportunity to glimpse some of the realities in African education, and to appreciate the remarkable initiative, resilience and optimism of the Phepo community. I also found the learners' eagerness to learn both heartwarming and humbling: on one occasion, two Gr. 5 girls asked me to come and teach their class because they were unattended (FN-01/08/06). Kerry, the Afrikaans and Art and Culture teacher, confirmed that learners often approach her, too, for the same reason (FN-24/07/06), so the girls were obviously motivated, not by novelty, but by a genuine desire to learn. I could not help comparing these keen learners with my more advantaged students who take education so for granted that they would not dream

of seeking out a teacher if their own were, for whatever reason, not present. Neither was I alone in my views: the NU teachers concurred, which is perhaps why we found it so disturbing that Phepo teachers absented themselves from class with such apparent regularity and impunity.

I return now to the issue of whether this partnership is experiential or service learning. It will be recalled that it fulfils most of the criteria for the latter: although co-curricular and not credit-bearing, the partnership aims to address long-term community needs, and links theory to practice through action and reflection. The final determinant is the issue of mutual benefits, and, in the light of the aforegoing discussion, I would suggest that the project can justifiably be regarded as service learning.

4.2 Problem-solving

Many of the challenges encountered by the partners concerned long-term or systemic issues which could not be resolved in the brief duration of the visit. These will be discussed in Sect. 4.3.1. Smaller communication and methodological differences were, however, clarified, thereby contributing to the overall success of the project. In addition, centre-margin tensions were less evident than was anticipated.

The first challenge that faced the partners related to communication, although language itself was not the issue: most Phepo interviewees admitted that they found the visitors' accent strange at first, but they quickly adapted (IF-03:15). The intermediate learners understood the lessons and needed few code-switching interventions from their own teachers, although in one of Hannah's lessons, culturally unfamiliar concepts like meadows, scarecrows, and roosting pigeons in a loft caused some confusion (I6-05:20). Nevertheless, the learners grasped the basic idea and enjoyed miming actions to accompany the song, 'Dingle Dangle Scarecrow' (FN-27/07/06). The Foundation learners needed more language support since the LoLT is Setswana, and in this case, their teachers played a pivotal role as translators. Yet, even here, the learners knew the numbers 1-10 in English, as well as some basic vocabulary, and so were able to follow Sally's instructions (IE-1:00).

Of more concern to the NU teachers than language *per se* was the lack of frank communication about goals for the visit. While their presence was fêted, their purpose was not explicitly articulated, and even by the end of the visit, they were still not sure they were really wanted (IN-21:26). One of Billig's (2000) prerequisites for effective service learning is the clear articulation of goals that meet genuine needs and have significant consequences for all stakeholders. In the current partnership, such explicit goal-setting was both limited and limiting. Apart from Sipho, who proactively sought out the NU teachers to identify his aims for the partnership, there were no early indications from the Phepo teachers about their needs. This may be partly attributable to the perceived status of the visitors; Thabo observed that 'they were seen as the super-teachers' (IT-06:30), so perhaps the power differentials made the local teachers more reluctant to initiate contact. Ansari and Phillips (2001) warn that:

> the resolution of major power disparities is a vital point in partnership work as differences in the distribution of power within a partnership could have detrimental effects to the future and sustainability of collaborative efforts (in Mitchell and Rautenbach, 2005, p. 105).

In their evaluation of service learning in KwaZulu-Natal, these researchers further report that:

> real communication… only emerges as the partnership attains a 'shared reality' where partners are able to negotiate each other's realities and arrive at common understandings… [and] the notion of power in partnerships is vital in terms of how it interacts with the development process (p. 110).

Fortunately, as people became acquainted, communication eased, too, and interested participants began to plan lessons together (IN-20:34). However, with fewer opportunities for team-teaching this year, the partnership lacked a strong sense of rapport and a common vision. Unresolved issues in this regard follow in Sect. 4.3.1.

The large class sizes also posed an initial challenge to the NU teachers, but they usually worked in pairs which facilitated management, and improvised as problems arose. For example, in Beth's recorder lesson, when the squeaking became intolerable, she had the learners place their instruments on their chins while they practised the fingering in silence (IN-34:00). Since she is not a music teacher, this was another manifestation of the ability to 'think on your feet' which she valued (IN-34:33).

The NU teachers also queried some methodological practices, in particular the tendency to 'teach to the minutiae of outcomes' (Jansen 1998, p. 326). However, as Alice pointed out, 'The things they were questioning… it's not like they were wrong things that people were doing – it's what the system expects people to do' (IT-05:04). Thus, once the visitors realised that many of the curricular constraints were systemic, they accepted them, even though they may not have agreed with them.

With regard to post-colonial tensions, Janks (FN-27/11/06) noted that the centre-margin differences were far less prevalent in 2006 than in 2005. She postulated that, because the NU teachers spent so much time in the library, space was more clearly demarcated. Therefore, the NU teachers could invite their Phepo colleagues into 'their' space, i.e. the library, and the Phepo teachers could reciprocate by having the visitors in their classrooms. This arrangement, while fortuitous, allowed participants to retain the autonomy which Billig (2000) considers crucial to successful partnerships.

As the Head of Curriculum, Alice played an instrumental role in clarifying goals, facilitating communication and mediating misunderstandings between the partners, and she accomplished this admirably (IT-22:49). She also revealed herself to be a creative problem-solver. Once it became clear that the library would no longer be used as a classroom, she had to find an alternative venue for her own class. Since the newly-constructed classrooms did not yet have blackboards, she promptly commandeered a portable one to use in the interim (FN-03/08/06). Also, to establish some library routines until the appointment of a librarian for 2007, she arranged for one of the administrative clerks to work in the library to fulfil this role (FN-14/09/06). In both instances, she demonstrated her ability to generate creative solutions to overcome obstacles which might otherwise have hampered the effective use of the library.
It should be remembered that some conflict was to be expected given the many differences between the participants. Therefore, it is all the more laudable that, as Janks observed:

> All these things were resolved. I don't think anybody was unhappy with you by the time you guys had finished… [and] they want people to come again. So I think that's part of the learning experience for everybody that it's not comfortable all the way through for anybody (IJ-11:24).

Like Sethole (IP-13:45), she acknowledges that change is difficult, and also that it is incremental, and welcomes indications that Phepo teachers are becoming 'more habituated to the process and to what happens… [they] look forward to the [NU] teachers coming… and more people [are] coming on board' (IJ-15:23).

4.3 Suggestions for Improvement

In their assessments, interviewees agreed that the partnership was beneficial to all stakeholders, and where they had criticisms, they offered constructive suggestions for future improvement. I will discuss these under two sub-headings: the first will deal specifically with unresolved issues regarding communication and systemic constraints in 2006, and the second will examine the interviewees' recommendations for the 2007 visit.

4.3.1 Unresolved problems in 2006

Lack of communication appears to have dogged the 2006 project virtually from its inception. The NU teachers stated that, apart from the recruiting session in September, they had very little contact with or guidance from the organisers at NU. They noted that interest from that initial meeting was high, but, as time passed with no obvious goal towards which to work, most students lost interest. Reasons for this include the fact that they could not prepare lesson materials beforehand, neither were they in contact with anyone in South Africa who could give them a sense of the partnership goals or of the school and its culture. This lack of coordination almost led to the demise of the project: by June, Abby was the only volunteer still committed to coming out (IN-06:04).

The NU team also commented on the apparent lack of commitment to the project from NU staff:

> The university obviously put it on their credits that they have this link – well, the university have done b-all, to be honest… They should at least have someone who's in charge of the project (IN-39:16).

They felt this lack of leadership also hampered their fundraising efforts because they were unable to provide concrete details of the project for which they were soliciting

donations. Moreover, the funds they did raise were distributed without their being consulted which they considered to be fundamentally disrespectful. Some of this money was sent to Sethole earlier in the year to complete two classrooms, and the rest given to Hannah to purchase two digital cameras and two jump drives for the school. The NU teachers would have preferred to allocate the money themselves once they had identified an area of need, e.g. the purchase of blackboards for the new classrooms (IN-35:40).

In fairness to the university coordinators, efforts were made to establish contact. Janks took copies of Phepo's course outlines to NU in March, so that the NU teachers would know what areas the learners would be studying. However, this material did not reach them (IJ-08:05). Similarly, Alice was in the UK in June and intended to meet with the NU organisers to clarify goals for the visit, but again this did not materialise. It should be noted, however, that all the organisers have demanding jobs and their busy schedules mitigated against facilitating communication between the various parties. Whatever the reasons, it is clear that the project was almost derailed by lack of coordination, and it was only with the belated and fortunate appointment of Hannah[16] 'that it started to get more organized' (IN-05:33).

However, here, too, there were misunderstandings, as Hannah thought the universities had undertaken the organization and preparation, and that her task was simply to encourage students to participate:

> I didn't think my role was to tell them what to do. I thought a lot of the work had already been done by the university … so it was a **great** shock to me when I found out that actually they had no idea why they were coming (IH-00:48).

Matters did not improve once the visitors arrived at Phepo, either. As already mentioned, they felt there was a great deal of "hype", but little frank communication or clear goal-setting, and they wondered whether their presence was really wanted or whether the visit was just a public relations exercise (IN-21:26). As we have seen, the Phepo community valued the team-teaching opportunities highly, so the mismatch in perceptions is perhaps attributable to the limited time the partners spent together and

[16] The GDE stipulated that the visitors be supervised by NU. With no available staff member, NU contracted Hannah, as she had volunteered in a Mamelodi school in 2005.

the resultant poor communication. To maximise the effectiveness of future partnerships, organisers should therefore more intentionally enable 'clear, open and accessible communication between partners… [and] feedback to, among and from all the stakeholders in the partnership' (Mitchell and Rautenbach 2005, p. 105). This mutual goal-setting would also signal the partners' commitment to 'the reciprocal power of service-learning for all parties involved' (Weah et al 2000, p. 675).

Similarly, the motives of the NU teachers were questioned by the Phepo SMT:

> I just felt they are here to tell and to show… If people come here… thinking that we are going to teach and tell, it's a little bit of a problem because… these are experienced teachers who've been to training, they've been teaching for many years… so it's a little bit offensive to say, 'I'll show you' (IT-01:54).

The warnings of Nayar, Kachru and Wu Jing-Yu (in Pennycook 1994) resonate here: unwittingly, the NU teachers appear to have communicated judgemental attitudes based on their own First World experiences which left some of their Phepo partners feeling defensive. Since many of their questions, however, centred on curricular demands or administrative routines which they deemed inappropriate, I would suggest that the judgements were not directed at individual teachers who, everyone acknowledged, are doing their best under trying circumstances. Rather, the NU teachers were frustrated by the constraints imposed on local teachers by a prescriptive system which does not allow teachers to exercise their professional judgement with regard to meeting their learners' specific needs.

Many of these tensions may have been effectively defused had there been a formal conflict resolution process:

> If you have a problem, who do you actually go to?... [And] we are guests in their school and in their country… There've been like numerous times when you've really wanted to say something and you don't know whether you should – but nothing's going to happen if none of us say anything, nothing's going to change (IN-24:02).

The dilemma was further exacerbated by a number of stressful internal factors, including family emergencies and staffing issues. Although these were extraneous to the partnership, they detracted significantly from the amount of time and emotional resources that the SMT had for conflict resolution (IJ-06:35). Both Comber and

Kamler (2005) and Kielsmeier (2000) emphasise the pivotal role of university coordinators in facilitating communication, so for future partnerships, it may be pre-emptive to have regular debriefings in which partners can air suggestions and resolve problems openly and timeously.

Finally, and no less significant to enhancing effective communication between partners, as already indicated, the Phepo learners missed the casual conversational exchanges that offer vicarious entrée to another world (I7-4:50), and they also observed, 'They don't know our language' (I5-5:45). Thus, it may be appropriate for the 2007 NU teachers to learn a few rudimentary phrases in Setswana beforehand. The learners and their teachers would appreciate this, particularly in the light of the hegemony of English in the local context.

Systemic constraints that created tensions include curricular demands, school routines, and teacher accountability, all of which were also problematic in 2005 (Janks and Burdett 2005; IH-02:00).

As noted earlier, Alice recognised that the student-centred methodologies of the NU teachers are also promoted by the NCS (IT-10:00), but in practice, departmental surveillance pressurises teachers to meet national standards, irrespective of learner needs. Rachel voiced her concern about lessons she had lost through some of the team-teaching: 'We are so behind with our learners' (IR-10:04). Although she appreciated how much she had gained from the opportunity, it is clear that her priority lies with the curriculum. Used to a greater level of professional autonomy, the NU teachers found this paradox incomprehensible:

> If the curriculum says children must be doing… complicated fractions, it doesn't matter if they don't know numbers to 20, they **do** complicated fractions. There's no differentiation. [The teachers] feel that they have to follow this curriculum which is two years above what the children can do (IH-19:52).

Local teachers feel frustrated, too, because they recognise that their learners are often not coping, but they are not empowered to make independent decisions in this regard, and coercive monitoring by district officials permits very little latitude. Ironically, the

lofty ideals of the NCS are being thwarted by the very officials tasked with their implementation.

To enhance take-up, several teachers suggested a reciprocal exchange in which Phepo teachers visit their partners' schools in Nottingham. While this would undoubtedly be a memorable experience, and one that would enhance their sense of connectivity, Janks questioned the pedagogical benefits, and the possible subsequent political repercussions on staff relations (IJ-29:15). Instead, she suggested there was more to be gained from her working directly with interested teachers in their immediate contexts, and/or facilitating visits to local primary schools. In fact, Phepo has an existing partnership with an Afrikaans school, but 'they don't capitalise on it… because if you really want to go to another school, then you have to go in your holidays when the private schools are **not** on holiday' (IJ-31:44). Thus, it appears that the suggested visit to Nottingham may have derived from the Australian precedent several years ago[17], and was perhaps motivated by the cultural capital accruing from overseas travel, rather than a real commitment to professional development.

Another problem area for the visitors was the apparent lack of routines and teacher accountability at the school. Hannah sums up the team's perceptions thus:

> I don't know how many hours a day the teachers have to do…; how many free periods they've got; **why** it is appropriate for leaving huge classes on their own, unattended, for **long** periods of time. I don't know what the school hours are yet – it seems to be a movable feast: on Monday… I was teaching and suddenly the bell went and I was told, 'Well, it's the last day of the month and the teachers go home [early].' Well… that might be cultural, but it's **not** good practice (IH-15:57).

In her analysis of the 'breakdown of the culture of teaching and learning', Christie (1998) maintains that 'the maintenance of time codes and the boundaries they provide is a central premise of school discipline'. Dysfunctional schools:

> were unable to enforce a full working day or week for students and staff, and students, staff and principals themselves often came late to school and left early… Whole school days were cancelled … and schools readily closed early... Unnecessary timetable confusions accentuated the sense of unpredictability about the school day… In short, boundaries of time no longer acted as stable predictors for school activities or reliable predicates for discipline.

[17] After Pat Thompson's visits to Phepo, she and Janks raised funding for three Phepo teachers to visit her research site in Australia.

Haphazard timetabling also characterised the NU-Phepo partnership, part of the problem being that schedules for the new term had not yet been finalised. As a consequence, Sally was inadvertently given an outdated timetable and so she, too, had her lessons interrupted. Since she had spent a great deal of time preparing beforehand to ensure that she scaffolded and consolidated concepts, she was justifiably upset when she could not complete the planned sequences (FN-02/08/06). Emily and Alice, who mediated the conflict, recognised Sally's frustration, but, as Emily observed, white people are more concerned about time than Africans (FN-14/08/06), suggesting that the conflict may have had a cultural dimension, too. This latter point also refers back to Hannah's comment – the NU team felt that their questions were sometimes deflected too glibly on cultural, rather than professional/ pedagogical, grounds, and this heightened tensions.

The impulse to rationalise all differences on cultural grounds may be theorised as a justifiable post-colonial assertion of local cultural norms and mores. However, in arguing for a shift in the 'locus of enunciation' (Bhaba 1994; Mignolo 2000; cited in Canagarajah 2005, p. 14), Canagarajah advocates for a reflexive cycle of deconstruction and reconstruction in which dominant discourses are deconstructed to identify useful or relevant elements and then reconstructed for local application, and local knowledge deconstructed to identify historical prejudices, then reconstructed to more appropriately meet contemporary needs. In other words, he cautions against the knee-jerk 'it's-our-culture' rejection of all things Western, and emphasises the synergistic benefits to both Centre and Margin of mutual respect and a reciprocal exchange of knowledge. Since misunderstandings were attributed to cultural differences, a formal process that facilitates critical discussion would perhaps allow future partners 'to engage productively with other knowledge traditions' and talk/write back to master myths that expound 'a globalised totality with uniform knowledge and hierarchical community' (Canagarajah 2005, p.20).

A particularly disappointing incident for two of the NU teachers occurred when they went to team-teach only to find that the teacher had left unexpectedly prior to the class. Not only did they feel disrespected, but it also called into question the *raison d'être* of the partnership: 'I'm not sure how it's spreading good practice… because there was

nobody in there watching' (IH-17:35). Since this was also an issue in 2005, the NU teachers had two recommendations to obviate a recurrence in future: firstly, to make it 'a golden rule' (IN-10:35) not to teach without a Phepo teacher present, and secondly, to establish one-to-one partnerships for the duration of the visit (IN-13:00). This latter suggestion was reiterated by the Foundation teachers (IF-13:34), and supported by the SMT (IT-15:03), so warrants serious consideration.

Hannah also had constructive suggestions for improving communication at the school:

> Really the communication in the school needs getting a grip of – like a huge whiteboard in the staffroom that says where every teacher is every moment of the day … and also who visitors are. It is a big school and…the communications within the school are not good (IH-07:57).

It was certainly evident during the partnership that the school hosts many visiting groups, sometimes several on a single day, and that teachers also have frequent other interruptions as a result of GDE directives, workshops and meetings. Thus, even the Phepo teachers and SMT are not always aware of their colleagues' whereabouts (as was the case with the absent teacher mentioned above). Among interventions for re-establishing schools as effective institutions of learning, Christie (1998) recommends that:

> a clear policy framework needs to be developed and communicated to schools on: grievance and disciplinary procedures; minimum hours of duty for staff as well as minimum school hours per day; protection of school space; basic roles, responsibilities and powers of different role players.

The implementation of such formal organizational routines for communication and accountability would greatly enhance the quality of teaching and learning at Phepo, too.

In sum, then, the problems that were unresolved this year related to communication and systemic constraints. Interviewees felt that some of the former were at least partly as a result of the library project and would be alleviated if the partners work together more closely in future, and if the partnership were of longer duration. This issue will be further explored in the following section. The latter are more difficult to address, and perhaps the best one can achieve here is an attempt to negotiate some flexibility within

the system, for, as Janks succinctly concluded, 'How you demonstrate alternative practices if you're stuck in dot pointers, I don't know' (IJ-39:10).

4.3.2 Recommendatios for 2007

Reference to Billig's (2000) quality indicators provides an overview of the 2006 partnership, and suggests broad goals for 2007.

Indicators present in 2006	Indicators absent in 2006
Project • links theory to practice • meets genuine community needs Participants • construct own knowledge • respect diversity • reflect critically on learning • celebrate service in multiple ways	Project • has clearly defined educational goals • is cognitively challenging Participants • control project selection, design, implementation and evaluation • communicate and collaborate fully • are thoroughly prepared beforehand

From the above comparison, it is clear that the partnership already meets six of Billig's criteria, and attention can now be given to the remaining five, in planning for 2007. In fact, participants themselves identified many of these factors in their evaluation of the project. Specifically, they made constructive suggestions relating to pre-trip planning, team composition, duration of the visit, and goal-setting and team-building for 2007.

Since some of the difficulties experienced by the NU teachers concerned a lack of communication between them and Wits/Phepo organisers, they offered to compile an information booklet for future groups. This would provide volunteers with email and/or telephone contact details, and might include some background on the school and previous NU projects, maps of Pretoria, accommodation, and notable tourist attractions (IN-10:35).

In addition, since volunteer interest appeared to wane over the course of the year, Janks suggested that recruitment start later. In the past, fund-raising initiatives had made it

necessary to mobilise in September, but since the school now needs expertise, not resources, planning could begin in January instead (IJ-14:42). The NU teachers felt that establishing email contact with prospective teaching partners beforehand would also help to build rapport and establish early goals (IN-14:50), and Lawrence offered to facilitate this process once the Phepo teachers have a sense of their curricular aims for the visit (IL-17:30).

All interviewees felt that this year's partnership was too short to be truly effective, although they also recognised that this was partly due to the specific nature of the project. To maximise benefits, however, all appealed for more time together in the classroom. The NU teachers suggested that the Phepo visit be integrated into their six-week in-school enquiry. This has a number of potential benefits: flights are cheaper in May, which would more than offset the additional accommodation costs; the longer duration would strengthen relationships; and motivation and interest at NU would be high since it would be for credit (IN-42:56). Janks thought the suggestion had great merit, although she pointed out that six weeks would probably be too disruptive to Phepo. However, part of the time could be spent in other, perhaps ex-Model C, schools, in a joint NU/Wits coursework module, or even in partnerships with Wits student teachers. She undertook to explore some of these options, albeit probably not for 2007, since a great deal of planning would have to precede implementation (IJ-39:52).

With regard to team composition, interviewees had a number of suggestions. The Phepo learners missed the inclusion of male teachers this year: in 2005, the two male teachers had played soccer with them at lunchtime, and they had obviously been looking forward to that again this year (I7-05:30). The Foundation teachers requested a more balanced mix between foundation and intermediate teachers: since Sally was the only primary teacher, some of them had had no opportunity to work with her, and even for those who did, the interactions varied in length from only 10 minutes in Emily's class to 90 minutes in Sibongile's. Ideally, they would have liked to have an NU partner for the entire duration of the visit, a sentiment widely echoed, as already mentioned above.

An issue raised by Hannah was the appropriacy of deploying newly-qualified secondary teachers in a primary school. They lacked confidence, so worked in groups of 2-5, but this did not demonstrate to the local teachers how they themselves could manage experiments single-handedly. She also realised belatedly that the young teachers were unaware of safety precautions appropriate to primary children:

> For instance, the lesson about evaporation… every child had a little burner that they lit, they were using matches – there were five [NU teachers] doing it in the classroom, teacher watching and about seventy children... And I wished I'd known – I kind of left them to it – now I realise they need as much guidance as the teachers here (IH-05:42).

Hannah also observed that the NU teachers used 'loads and loads of resources' whereas the experiment could have been demonstrated as effectively, and more safely, using just a milk bottle and a kettle. 'I think what we need to explain to the teachers is that they **must** teach as if they are a teacher here' (IH-16:48). A more conservative use of available resources would ensure that consumable supplies last longer and would also allay the SMT's concerns about depleting the school's resource base.

In addition, the NU teachers questioned why they needed to be 'chaperoned', since they were legally adult and fully qualified. Apparently they were unaware of the GDE stipulation to this effect, yet, even in view of this, they wondered if Hannah's seniority perhaps undermined their own credibility in the eyes of the local teachers (IN-37:55), so that they were perceived more as students than as qualified professionals. They mentioned that the other UK volunteers were accompanied by someone closer in age, and considered this preferable. Interestingly, if, as they suggested, they were to come here as part of their six-week enquiry, they would not yet be fully-qualified, which may diminish their perceived status in a different way. However, while Hannah's seniority may have been a limiting factor, coordination is probably more crucial to the long-term efficacy of the partnership, so if she does, in fact, return next year, the relationship may be facilitated by the continuity, irrespective of status differentials.

One more suggestion on the topic of team composition came from Thabo (IT-22:40) who asked if a school administrator could be included amongst the volunteers next year. However, since the NU teachers who come to Phepo are all newly qualified, they would not have the necessary training or experience, but perhaps the NU coordinator,

whether Hannah or someone else, may be able to offer some support in this regard. At any rate, the request itself is another indicator of the Phepo community's desire to grow professionally, in this case coming from an administrator who is also studying further to upgrade his qualifications.

Finally, participants all recommended more structured opportunities for goal setting and team building. All felt it was imperative for the NU teachers to know beforehand what they would be required to do, and Hannah agreed to act as intermediary between them and the university coordinators (IH-15:00). In addition, Emily recommended an initial staff meeting at which goals could be jointly negotiated and formalised, and timetables distributed (IE-12:50). On the other hand, the NU team requested that they receive the timetable for their visit well ahead of time, so that they would be fully apprised of expectations before their arrival (IN-10:35; IH-05:10). Based on her observations this year, Hannah further suggested that the 2007 visit be focussed on developing literacy skills throughout the school:

> Nobody seems to have heard of reading readiness and what other skills children need to read… because some skills have to be developed, and the same with writing... Next year perhaps we need to go right back to basics… Just trying to develop the children's own writing is a biggie, you know, just getting them writing their own sentences and drawing a picture (IH-18:30).

The challenge remains to find ways of relinquishing the stranglehold of the curriculum long enough to allow for this sort of intensive focus, and the solution may simply entail a broader, more integrative interpretation of the learning outcomes. Of course, the project will ultimately evolve organically, as it has done previously, shaped by individual interests, team dynamics and teacher needs. Nevertheless, the sense of continuity and purpose augurs well for the next partnership, and has created optimism that what has already been achieved will be sustained and further developed.

CHAPTER 5 – CONCLUSION

This research aimed to investigate the service learning partnership between Phepo and NU with a view to answering the following three questions:

- Who benefits from the service learning partnership between NU and Phepo?
- What challenges had to be overcome to realize these benefits? How was this accomplished?
- What shortcomings remain to be solved? How might the partnership programme be improved in the future?

In the following sections, I will first summarise the major findings of the study in relation to each of these questions, and will then explore the broader implications arising from the project and suggest directions for further research.

5.1 Major findings

Firstly, the reported findings show conclusively that all stakeholders benefited, some more than others. Clearly, the learners gained the most from the experience: they enjoyed the NU teachers' lessons, were introduced to the library and the RealeBooks programme, have the ongoing benefits of a well-resourced and functional library, and their horizons have been broadened by exposure to the UK visitors. The Phepo teachers were enriched by the team-teaching experiences and some expressed a determination to build on their new insights. Moreover, they too have access to the library for their classroom and personal research, and also have an enhanced sense of connectivity to the wider world. The SMT felt that some of their professional development concerns were addressed informally through the partnership, and they believe the library to be an asset to the school and local community. Finally, the NU teachers gained satisfaction from establishing the library, enjoyed working with the Phepo teachers and learners, extended themselves professionally, in terms of both grade level and content area, and learned about the unique challenges and joys associated with teaching in an African school at this time of social and political transition in South Africa. On the basis of this evidence, then, it is clear that the partnership was a positive and beneficial experience to all partners, and should therefore certainly continue into

the third year. Additionally, the mutuality of benefits also justifies defining the partnership as service learning.

Secondly, the participants showed themselves to be willing and competent problem-solvers. Thus, where necessary, Phepo teachers interpreted for the learners to facilitate communication where language presented an obstacle, particularly in the case of the younger children. Also, once the library was completed and partners started team-teaching, needs, goals and the inevitable curricular constraints were more frankly articulated and collaboration thereby enhanced. As a consequence, partners learned from each other, and felt that they would incorporate new strategies into their own practices as a result of their sharing. Finally, as the NU teachers grew accustomed to the classroom realities, they developed effective strategies to manage the large numbers and facilitate maximal participation of all Phepo learners. All of these are manifestations of a willingness to collaborate and compromise in the interests of fostering mutual professional growth.

Thirdly, there were some unresolved challenges which should be addressed to improve the project for next year. Foremost among these was the lack of coordination that characterized this year's partnership. Based on the NU teachers' observations, therefore, I would recommend that from the beginning of January when recruitment begins, there be clear and ongoing communication between the NU and Wits university coordinators, the NU teachers and the Phepo SMT and teachers. This should include preparation of the NU teachers, especially with regard to the curricular and classroom constraints under which they will work, as well as goals for the third year and perhaps some prior planning. The input of the 2006 volunteers would prove invaluable in this regard. Secondly, given the particular needs of the school, there should be a concerted effort to recruit more primary teachers and perhaps a few male teachers too. Finally, to obviate a repeat of the last two years' frustrations, expectations regarding timetabling and teacher accountability should be explicitly and publicly articulated beforehand. Specifically, I would recommend that partner teachers spend more time together, both in planning and in teaching, so that they can develop a shared vision and a sense of continuity over the duration of the visit. In addition, a daily debriefing attended by all partners would allow an early and pre-emptive airing of views and difficulties which

can then be addressed in a timely manner. These sessions would also foster out-of-school contacts with the added benefit of enhancing cross-cultural understanding.

5.2 Broader implications

Effective interventions are imperative to addressing the literacy crisis in disadvantaged South African schools. Foremost is the need to encourage more reading among learners whose home literacy practices do not foreground written texts. Local research has documented significant gains when teachers promote relevant non-fiction, as opposed to fiction, reading (Winburg and Botes 2005). While this strategy is also supported by international research with reluctant readers (for example, Dreher 2003), it presupposes that the teachers themselves are 'literate subjects' (Stein and Janks 2006). Since this is often not the case, these researchers argue for teacher education programmes that develop teachers' own literacy practices. They further propose the introduction of diploma and degree courses in literacy, the appointment of literacy specialists to schools, and the development of formal literacy policies in all schools. Finally, they suggest an incentive scheme in which teachers earn PD points (perhaps towards licensing requirements) if they collaborate with literacy specialists. Certainly, since reading is seminal to all learning, teacher education institutions should seriously consider mandating intensive literacy development for all candidate teachers.

Besides improving pre-service training, practising teachers should be held accountable for updating/upgrading their skills. At present, there is no expectation for teachers to submit annual professional development plans nor are there significant financial incentives for further study. Clearly, if teaching is to be improved, the DoE will need to institute formal procedures to create a culture of lifelong learning among educators. In addition, adequate funding must be provided for education faculties to develop quality in-service programmes that are responsive to the specific needs of particular teachers and classroom contexts, rather than the one-size-fits-all and oft-disparaged GDE workshops currently mandated. Fiscal constraints notwithstanding, investment in professional development is infinitesimal in comparison to the human and economic costs of the current literacy crisis.

5.3 Directions for further research

With regard to further research, on a small scale, it would be productive to follow the NU-Phepo partnership into its third year, to determine whether and to what extent participants build on the initiatives and insights of the previous years. In addition, it would be interesting to determine the degree to which teachers have integrated the library into their teaching, and whether strategies that are specifically targeted at enhancing literacy teaching (as suggested by Hannah) are taken up in a meaningful way.

On a larger scale, service learning offers a viable and, as yet scarcely tapped, resource to meet the INSET needs of South African teachers, and warrants further research and wider implementation. Even the short-term NU-Phepo partnerships have had a significant and lasting impact on the participants, so longer-term commitments could be even more beneficial. Higher education institutions may consider requiring volunteer hours in local schools as a mandatory component of their teacher training programmes, as is the case, for example, in Canada. In one innovative local project, Castle et al (2004) conclude:

> when community service is coupled with school experience…, learning is more intense, meaningful, productive and pleasurable to student teachers… [and] provides opportunities for student teachers to engage in sustained, direct interaction with other participants in a community of practice (p. 17).

There are a number of advantages to implementing a long-term service component in teacher education programmes. For example, such teacher partnerships:

- ameliorate the high teacher-student ratio with no extra cost to the state;
- ensure that new teachers enter the profession with realistic expectations, practical skills and a professional support network;
- encourage the reciprocal sharing of recent theoretical developments and practical classroom application to the benefit of both the pre-service teachers and their more experienced mentors; and
- reinforce the principle of ongoing professional development and shared practice.

The possibility of establishing teacher education partnerships with overseas universities also warrants serious investigation. Such an initiative would enrich all participants by adding an international dimension, and would potentially benefit the local tourist industry, too.

Finally, it is imperative that the state and DoE collaborate to launch an intensive and sustained national awareness campaign to raise literacy levels. International literacy researchers like Stanovich (1986) and Clay (1985) advocate early intervention to avoid 'the Matthew effect' which results in struggling readers falling further and further behind their more capable peers. To this end and to target limited funding optimally, primary (and ideally pre-primary) schools should be the focus of research-based initiatives which are specifically tailored for the local context.

In her recommendations for revitalizing African township schools, Christie (1998) emphasises the importance of building a sense of agency and responsibility at school level:

> [Interventions] need to be premised on the assumption that each school has skills, experience and potential that can be identified and developed.

In this regard, Phepo offers an exemplary model of purposive agency: the garden feeds the children, donor funding resources the school, and the service-learning partnership with NU offers context-specific opportunities for shared practice and enhanced learning. Led by the inspirational Sethole and supported by the visionary Janks, the partnership is enabling the Phepo community:

> to grow beyond both the cultural models of their home cultures and those of mainstream and school culture… [and to be] open to rethinking, to imagining newer and better, more just and more beautiful words and worlds (Gee 1996, p. 89).

Noble goals indeed for all educators, and the just desserts of all learners.

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Appendix A: Interview schedule – semi-structured

University coordinators:

- What are your goals for this partnership?
- How did you prepare the students for the visit?
- What particular difficulties did you witness or mediate? What was the outcome?
- In your opinion, who benefited from the partnership, and in what ways?
- What specific recommendations do you have for future improvement?

Phepo school administrators:

- What are your reasons for participating in this partnership?
- What particular difficulties did you witness or mediate? What was the outcome?
- In your opinion, who benefited from the partnership, and in what ways?
- What specific recommendations do you have for future improvement?

Phepo teachers:

- Did you participate in the partnership last year? If not, why not? If so, who in your opinion benefited, and in what ways?
- Why did you decide to participate this year?
- What particular difficulties did the partnership present, and were these overcome? If so, how; if not, why not?
- In your opinion, who benefited from the partnership, and in what ways?
- Would you recommend that Phepo partner with NU again next year? If so, how can we improve the programme? If not, why not?

NU teachers:

- Why did you volunteer to participate in this partnership?
- In what ways did you prepare for the visit? Was the preparation useful? What else did you need to know in order to be better prepared? What advice would you give future participants?
- What particular difficulties did the partnership present, and were these overcome? If so, how; if not, why not?
- In your opinion, who benefited from the partnership, and in what ways?
- Would you recommend that NU partner with Phepo again next year? If so, how can we improve the programme? If not, why not?

Phepo learners:

- Do you think it was a good idea to have the NU teachers visit Phepo? Why or why not?
- In what ways are they the same as your own teachers? In what ways are they different?
- Was it difficult to communicate with them, or understand them? How did you overcome this difficulty?
- What did you think of the learning activities/materials that they developed?
- What advice would you give them/us so that we can make this an even better experience in the future?

Appendix B: Information Letters and Consent Forms

1.1 Subject Information Sheet (adult participants)

Wits School of Education

27 St Andrews Road, Parktown, Johannesburg, 2193 • Private Bag 3, Wits 2050, South Africa
Tel: +27 11 717-3007 • Fax: +27 11 717-3009 • E-mail: enquiries@educ.wits.ac.za • Website: www.wits.ac.za

Dear Teachers of "Phepo"/Nottingham University

My name is Cathy Graetz, and I am doing research for a Master's degree at Wits University. I will be trying to answer the question: Who benefits from the partnership between Nottingham University and "Phepo"? I hope my study will tell us more about teaching partnerships, and help "Phepo"/Nottingham University decide on similar programmes in the future.

If you would like to tell me what you think, you can join a focus group of other teachers from your school. We will meet for about an hour one afternoon after school to talk about the partnership. With your permission, I will tape record our talk, so that I remember all the important details. No-one else will hear the tapes, or read my written notes on them. I will make sure that no-one else knows what you said, and I will not use your real name in my report.

Taking part in the study is voluntary, and no-one will be advantaged or disadvantaged in any way for taking part or not. You can also refuse to answer any questions you do not want to, and you can leave the study at any point.

If you would like to take part in this study, please fill in the forms below. I will collect them from you on 27 July 2006. If you have any questions, I can be contacted by telephone at (011)447-7872 or e-mail at cgraetz58@yahoo.com.

Thank you.

1.2 Subject Information Sheet ("Phepo" learners)

Wits School of Education

27 St Andrews Road, Parktown, Johannesburg, 2193 • Private Bag 3, Wits 2050, South Africa
Tel: +27 11 717-3007 • Fax: +27 11 717-3009 • E-mail: enquiries@educ.wits.ac.za • Website: www.wits.ac.za

Dear Learners

The teachers from Nottingham will be visiting "Phepo" again this year, and I will be doing a study on their visit. One of my big questions is: How do the Nottingham teachers help the learners of "Phepo"? I need your help to answer my question.

If you want to tell me what you think, you can join a group of other learners from your class. If you don't want to join the group, you won't get into trouble.

I may ask you if I can copy some of your work.

We will also meet one afternoon after school to talk about the Nottingham teachers.

I will tape record our talk, so that I can remember all the important things you said.

No-one else will hear the tapes, or read my written notes on them. I will make sure that no-one knows what you said because I won't use your real name in my report.

You won't have to answer any questions you don't want to, and you can leave whenever you like. I won't be upset, and you won't get into trouble.

If you want to join the group, please write your name on the forms and sign them. Also, please ask your parent or guardian to sign the forms too. I will collect them from the school on 27 July 2006.

If you or your parent or guardian have any questions, you can phone me at (011)447-7872.

Thank you.

2.1 Adult Interview/Focus Group Consent

_____
PARTICIPANT'S NAME

I would like to join an interview or focus group led by Cathy Graetz for her study of the partnership between "Phepo" and Nottingham University.

I understand that:

- it is voluntary to take part in this interview/group;
- I can refuse to answer any questions I do not want to answer;
- no-one else will know what I said in the interview/group discussion;
- I can leave the study at any time and there will be no disadvantage to me for doing so; and
- I will not be named or identified in reported research or publications.

Signed _____
PARTICIPANT

2.2 Adult Recording Consent

_____
PARTICIPANT'S NAME

I give permission for Cathy Graetz to tape-record my interview/focus group discussion about the partnership between "Phepo" and Nottingham University.

I understand that:

- no-one else will hear the tapes or see the written notes made from them;
- my name will not be used in the written notes, reported research or publications;
- the tape recordings will be destroyed when all research is finished.

Signed _____
PARTICIPANT

3.1 Parent Participation Consent (learners)

_____
LEARNER'S NAME

I give permission for my child to take part in the study of the Nottingham teachers' visit.

I understand that:

- it is voluntary to take part in this study;
- my child can refuse to answer questions he/she doesn't want to answer;
- no-one else will know what my child said in the group;
- my child can leave the study if he/she wants to, and will not get into trouble for doing so;
- my child's name will not be used in any written reports; and
- some of my child's work may be copied.

Signed _____
PARENT/GUARDIAN

3.2 Parent Recording Consent (learners)

_____
LEARNER'S NAME

I give permission for Cathy Graetz to tape-record my child's group discussion about the Nottingham teachers' visit.

I understand that:

- no-one else will hear the tapes or see the notes made from them;
- my child's name will not be used in any written reports; and
- the tape recordings will be destroyed when all research is finished.

Signed _____
PARENT/GUARDIAN

4.1 Learner Participation Assent

_____
LEARNER'S NAME

I want to take part in the study on the Nottingham teachers' visit.

I understand that:

- I can choose to join the study;
- I don't have to answer questions that I don't want to answer;
- no-one else will know what I said in the group;
- I can leave the study if I want to, and I won't get into trouble;
- my name won't be used in any written reports; and
- some of my work may be copied.

Signed _____
LEARNER

4.2 Learner Recording Assent

_____
PRINT FULL NAME

Cathy Graetz can tape-record my group's talk about the Nottingham teachers' visit.

I understand that:

- no-one else will hear the tapes or see her notes;
- my name will not be used in any written reports; and
- the tape recordings will be destroyed when all research is finished.

Signed _____
LEARNER

4.3 Setswana Parent Consent (learners)

Batswadi

Monengwaga re etetswe ke baeng ba gotswa Nottingham University – UK gape. Wo mongwe wa baeng ba e lego Cathy Graetz o kgophela go somisana le bana ba lena, a dira dinyakisiso (research) le bona goba ka bona eo e amanang le go eta ga bona mo Phepo School. Go dira bjalo kege ngwana goba wena motswadi o dumela, ga se kgapeletso. Ka bjalo tlatsa leina la ngwana wa gago o be o gatise leina la gago foromong e ka fase.

Nna _____ motswadi wa _____

wa leng mmphatong wa Gr. _____ ke dumelela ngwana wa ka go somisana le

Cathy Graetz go dira dinyakisiso le yena.

Signature: _____ Date: _____