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"School-level politics, zones of mediation and the struggle for equity - minded change in South African schools: the case of a Gonubie primary school."

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DEDICATION:

This research is dedicated to Jon Allagappen, with all my love and admiration.

LIST OF ACRONYMS:

ANC

CAPS

DBE

HoD

LIEP

RSA

SASA

SGB

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CHAPTER ONE:
INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines and explains the social and academic context of the research. This research is an interpretative text-based case study involving the parents, staff and Principal of Gonubie Primary School regarding the selection of an additional language within the Foundation Phase. The central aim of the study is to provide a rich description of the language practices and attitudes of parents, teachers and the Principal concerning learners in the foundation phase of a former model- C school.

Whilst the focal point of much of this case, in the print and electronic media, has been to investigate the legality and fairness of the actions taken by the stakeholders concerned, this research aims to approach the topic from its human perspective. In addition, it aims to examine and understand the feelings and effects behind the decisions taken and their effect on the school and the community of Gonubie.

In order to do this the research will draw heavily on sociologist Jeannie Oakes and colleagues' idea of schools as "zones of mediation" (1998) of economic, racial, social and cultural phenomena. It is the aforementioned author's belief that social interactions — sustained by explicit organised school practices — limit our ability to accept and comply with integrationist aims of equity and the redress of cumulative disadvantages due to past racial discrimination.

1.2. Context

Since 1976, the struggle for equity in South Africa has been at the forefront of the nation's wider political and economic struggles. However, post 1994; evidence of these struggles has been acknowledged in formal government policies and legislation such as the South African Schools Act (1996) and various forms of curriculum documentation. Although much of the struggle for equity in education has been at national level with regard to policy, political struggles over equality have continued at a grassroots level at schools too.

It is understood that no policy exists in a vacuum and many factors both locally, nationally and even historically affect policy-making decisions. Policy development happens from two directions, top down and bottom up. Historically language planning and policy making has always taken place at government level ensuring that policy development was a top down process. The LiEP (1997) was introduced to education almost sixteen years ago and gave each school the responsibility of developing a language policy unique to that school. In line with the democratization of South Africa, policy making shifted from a top down model to a bottom up process. The school governing body (SGB) which is representative of parents, teachers and in some cases learners thus became responsible for the development of the school's language policy.

Martin (1996: p.2) from her studies believes "that policy formation can be conceptualized as an evolutionary cyclical process rather than a linear event". She feels that all stakeholders [parents, teachers and community members] need to be involved so that the gap between the policy formation and its implementation in schools can be narrowed. It is therefore necessary for the opinions and understanding of various stakeholders in the school to be considered in order to facilitate the process. In line with the bottom up approach to transformation this study took place in the foundation phase so as to facilitate the process of transformation from the grass roots level.

Issues of controversy at school level have often taken the form of admission problems, school fee conflicts, differences over discipline, and so forth. As of late, however, school level struggles have taken a new turn with the development of a new curriculum policy, the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement, CAPS, (2011). The key issue at play is that of language, particularly the selection of a first additional language. Language, particularly indigenous language, has always been a sensitive issue in South Africa. Between these pages one has a glimpse of the attitudes and perceptions of stakeholders sharing their views and understanding of language and language practices within the context of a small school in the Eastern Cape.

The purpose of this research is to contribute to an understanding of the localized patterns of political conflict over language. Thus this research will make use of a school as a case in which problems of this nature are being experienced. In the case of Gonubie Primary School, parents with children enrolled in the Foundation Phase, learnt for the first time in a CAPS assessment meeting, that the Department of Education required a First Additional Language as part of the new syllabus (2011). The issue of concern necessitating the meeting stems from the fact that Gonubie Primary School had decided on and adopted Afrikaans as their first additional language, without duly consulting the parents (*Sunday Times*, *January 2011).* This decision was effective as of January 2012, and its consequences have been that Afrikaans was introduced from Grade 1 as the school's official First Additional Language and that any learner who fails Afrikaans will repeat that grade, no matter how well they do in all other subjects (*Sunday Times*, January 2011).

Whilst this may have been a completely justifiable curriculum policy decision, it had an unanticipated consequence for a small group of quintile 5 English home language schools. Over the past fifteen years, privileged public schools such Parkview Junior Primary in Johannesburg and Grove Primary School in Cape Town had begun teaching two additional languages in the Foundation Phase. In Johannesburg, the two additional languages tended to be Afrikaans and Zulu, in the Western Cape it was Afrikaans and Xhosa (NEPI, 1992). Although teaching of these additional languages was often limited to the oral language, i.e. listening and speaking by Grade 3 some reading and writing had begun to be introduced.

The decision taken by the Gonubie Primary School stakeholders was considered highly unfair for many reasons, one being that firstly, this is a primary school based in the Eastern Cape which caters to many Xhosa First Language speakers for whom learning Afrikaans in addition to English for the first time will be an enormous task. Secondly, as the parents of such learners were not considered when this significant decision was taken, it cannot be considered as having the best interests of all learners [who make up the school] as the foremost priority. Since this school has brought the issue of the first additional language policy to light, other schools in other provinces such as Kwazulu-Natal have come to the fore with their concerns regarding the fairness of such decisions. This is particularly the case as schools are

powerful generators, justifiers and transmitters of race, gender and class bias thoughts, actions and identities. Therefore the challenge is to shift the 'roles, rules, social character and functioning of schools' (Nkomo, Chisholm & McKinney, 2004:3) and stimulate new ways of being, thinking and practicing that are in keeping with ideals of equity and justice as defined in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996).

1.3. Problem Statement

Conflict occurs in the school as it occurs in any other sector representing society. However, very little or no research has been conducted on the manner in which this conflict is manifested and resolved in South African schools.The manner in which this conflict is managed and if it is done constructively is of great interest. Especially as, for the most part it would seem that within South African schools, a 'tyranny of the majority' (Guinier, 1994) exists regarding the application of education policy. Predominantly with regard to how privilege and power is maintained and how stakeholders attempt to contest and address such challenges and in so doing disturb the status quo and redistribute power.

1.4. Significance of the study

The rationale for this research is to try and enable stakeholders in the foundation phase to come to a better understanding of the relationship between "policy-as-practice and policy-as-legislation". The purpose of this study is to contribute to an understanding of the localized patterns of political conflict over language. The study will provide new understanding of the conflict generated between majority and minority groups in an attempt to achieve equity and redress in schools.

1.5. Aim of the study

Firstly, the aim of the study is to determine the features and patterns of school level politics and critically analyse the manner in which conflict (which one would assume has no impact on the running of the school), can directly affect the school and the broader community which it serves. Secondly to determine the zones of mediation

and the struggle over the recognition of language, culture and power as represented in the case of Gonubie Primary School. Especially as the conflict above is informed by beliefs and assumptions which are important facets of how policy and school practice are informed.

1.6. Research Questions

This research effort investigates in a single educational setting the language policy, practices and attitudes towards language issues of a school principal, teachers and parents at foundation phase level. The following are the research goals:

1. What are the features and patterns of school-level politics?

2. What does the conflict over the adoption of a First Additional Language at Gonubie Primary school reveal about the zones of mediation and struggles for recognition of language, culture and power?

1.7. Outline of the thesis

The thesis takes the following format:

Chapter One is focused on providing the reader with a general overview of the research. It outlines the context of the case study under examination, the research aims as well as a motivation for the study.

Chapter Two is centered on the theoretical framework which serves as the basis for the dissertation as developed through a review of literature relating to Oakes' Zones of Mediation.

Chapter Three presents the methodological structure of the dissertation. It provides the reader with in-depth information pertaining to the research approach, method, site and sample.

Chapter Four serves as a forum to present a history of education in South Africa and the Eastern Cape in particular. As well as provides an in-depth analysis of the conflict, in terms of key events and stakeholders involved. This is dealt with from its inception to its resolution in the Equality Court as well as data collected from stakeholders. This data will be presented in its raw form so as to enable the reader to 'hear' the voices of the participants.

Chapter Five involves an analysis of the data as collected from the interviews with stakeholders and investigation of documentation pertinent to the case study. It will discuss the findings of the data collection according to the aims of the research, its associated questions and ultimately the framing evidence provided from the literature review.

In conclusion, Chapter Six provides a summary of the main findings, wherein one makes some recommendations based on the evidence gathered in the dissertation whilst highlighting areas of further interest in this field.

CHAPTER TWO:
LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The focus of this research is to contribute to an understanding of the localized patterns of political conflict over language. The study will provide new understanding of the conflict generated between majority and minority groups in an attempt to achieve equity and redress in schools. South Africa is undergoing a period of transition and transformation. One of the many areas of change that needs to be addressed is that of language, encompassing language policy and planning, language rights and educational language policy.

2.2 Historic overview

South African schools have also shouldered much responsibility for enacting social change post-apartheid. When the African National Congress [ANC] took over government of the country in 1994, it faced widespread social problems including drastic racial disparities, a poverty rate of 35–55 per cent, high unemployment, lack of running water and electricity, and the rapid spread of HIV/AIDS (Fiske & Ladd, 2004). Thus, an equitable educational system would not only address the need for social unification, but also bolster the poor economic conditions within the country.

On-the-ground observations at multiracial schools in South Africa, however, suggest that policy makers have looked towards education as a solution to social problems without considering how non-structural factors could undermine their drastic reforms. Economic, racial, social, and cultural phenomena converge and create a complex set of social interactions — sustained by explicit organized school practices — that are limited in their impact to realize fully the objectives integrationist aims. Just as Meyer and Rowan (1978) articulated years prior, it is the “street-level bureaucrats,” the principals and teachers in a school, who shape (and are shaped by) the local political, cultural and social climate. Additionally, educators model the behaviors and values that learners emulate. Although schools in South Africa have desegregated, bolstered by legal mandates and educational policies, effectual change requires

attention and action toward entrenched idea and belief systems maintained by teachers, learners, and parents (Pillay, 2004).

One begins this literature review by moving from that which is known to the unknown with regard to South African education. According to Kallaway (1986) the period between 1976 and 1986 includes two major break point events in South Africa. Firstly, the 1976 uprising and the school boycotts of the 1980s “demonstrated the extent to which educational institutions had become sites of struggle in South Africa” (Kallaway 1986, p.20). Secondly, the Vaal uprisings of 1984-1985 marked the beginning of a decisive shift in strategy from “educational boycott to a long-term strategy of reconstruction through the development of an alternative People’s Education” (PE) (Kallaway 1986, p.20) under the leadership of the National Education Crisis Committee (NECC) (Kallaway 1986, p.20).

These educational struggles were rooted in an opposition to the racist, discriminatory practices that were constructed through the policies of the Nationalist government (Kallaway 1986, p.20). Since coming into power in 1948 the Nationalist government pursued an agenda of enforced segregation between black and white people under the policy Apartheid for various political, ideological and economic purposes (Kallaway, 1986: p 21). Bantu education was introduced as an educational configuration of Apartheid and resistance against it culminated in the Soweto uprising of 1976. Since then educational sites became one of the primary arenas of struggle against Apartheid (Kallaway, 1986: p 21).

In almost twenty years since the first democratic elections of 1994, South African society still is in a tumultuous process of transformation with the aim of achieving equity, in almost every sector of the economy. This can be as a result of an ever increasing gap between the rich and poor and the many diverse cultures of South Africa. Schools, as a microcosm of society both reflect and contribute to such social tension.

The immediate goal after the democratic elections was to expand access to education for all South African citizens. The South African Schools Act (SASA) of 1996 saw an integrated educational system as addressing the collective needs of a

fledgling democracy. The SASA (1996) is a tool by which education is democratised through the establishment of democratic structures of school governance in all public schools. Democratisation includes the idea that stakeholders such as parents, teachers, learners and community members 'must' participate in the activities of the school, in some way, shape or form. Given that the apartheid government had used inequitable educational policies to sustain racial stratification, the SASA (1996) called specifically for a non-racial and unified national system of education to address past injustices. Sayed (2001), however alludes to class and race inhibitors in the reality of democratisation.

Jansen (2002) provides an interesting view for analysing educational policy in South Africa through "political symbolism as policy craft" (p.200). Jansen argues that whilst all policies are subjected to the politics of symbolism, South African education policy-making processes stress "symbolic functions above practical consideration" (Jansen, 2002: p.208). Thus the making of education policy in South Africa is best described as a struggle for the achievement of a broad political symbolism that would mark the shift from apartheid to post-apartheid society.

The book edited by Sayed and Jansen (2001) argues that there has been a "gap" between idealistic policy developments in the post-apartheid period and the failure to effectively implement them in schools and classrooms. In the same book Jansen (2001) once again asserts that the policy gap can best be explained as "political symbolism" (p.38). Non-change in education lies in the fact that state policy-making is about settling political struggles rather than solving educational problems. Thus schools have not changed and quality in education has not improved. In the conclusion, Sayed (2001) makes the point that the implementation problem is about "discursive contradictions, continuities and discontinuities, and mediations that reflect the interests of the different actors that determine and contest policy development" (p.xi).

2.3 Conceptual framework

Oakes' (2005) framework as developed in her study of how schools structure inequality through tracking (2005) forms the lens through which this research will

examine the case. Her hypothesis is that reforms are either embraced or rejected based on the will and perceived needs and motives of its stakeholders (Oakes, 2005). Her theory is based on the practice of tracking or separating learners according to their intellectual ability. It was determined that prior to 1970, tracking took the form of learners being placed into overarching academic programs specifically designed to prepare students for career opportunities or entry into post-secondary education. However, as the civil rights movement began to influence the education policy of the United States of America, highly institutionalized, rigidly defined comprehensive tracking programs were gradually replaced by more flexible, less standardized subject-specific pathways through school (Lucas, 1999.(This is a practice that continues in nearly all middle and high schools to this day (Oakes, Gamoran, & Paige, 1992).

Thus when teachers recommend certain learners for certain academic classes, they are making a decision that has the potential to influence students' high school academic careers (Kelly, 2008), potential university enrollment as well as future employment opportunities (Kelly, 2008). As a result of low-income students tending to remain in low-track classes (Kelly, 2008; Oakes, 2005) and enroll in college at lower rates than their more economically advantaged peers, it can be argued the process of tracking has, over time, expanded the "opportunity gap" present in many secondary schools (Darling-Hammond, 2010). This gap, which Darling-Hammond describes as "the accumulated differences in access to key educational resources-expert teachers, personalized attention, high-quality curriculum opportunities, good educational materials, and plentiful information resources-that support learning at home and school," is one well-documented outcome of curricular tracking and deserves additional consideration within the context of the course placement process (p. 28).

Oakes' (1992) theory of tracking, which details its technical, political, and normative dimensions and informed the development and organization of this review, provides a practical context to consider the intimate relationship between the opportunity gap and academic grouping. This connection is examined through a close analysis of the educational environment created by ability grouping, the students this practice traditionally disadvantages, and the assumptions supporting its maintenance. Three

specific areas of research are addressed: the stratification present in American public high schools *(technical dimension of tracking)*; low-income students' limited access to a high-quality, rigorous course of study (*political dimension of tracking*); and the lack of evidence supporting the widespread use of tracking at the secondary level (*normative dimension of tracking*).

The technical dimension of tracking can be described as both the process and criteria used to separate students into classes according to academic capability. This academic differentiation, Oakes (1992) argues, "... continues throughout the grades through variations in the curricular content, pace, quantity, culminating in distinct college-preparatory and non-college preparatory programs and finer distinctions among levels within the two" (p. 12). Two outcomes related to the technical dimension of tracking deserve attention.

First, many high schools in the United States have explicit policies and organizational structures which dictate the assignment of students to different curricular tracks for instructional purposes. While few would argue this point, Darling-Hammond (2010) suggests these differing academic pathways result in the rationing of high-quality education.

Oakes (1987) argues students experience school differently because established curricular paths "form a hierarchy in schools with the most academic or advanced track seen as the top" (p. 4). Writing about stratification in schools, Apple (2004) argues schools serve as mechanisms to distribute select knowledge and cultural resources to certain students in order to separate them from others**.** Consequently, as students' progress through school they are not only provided with different sets of experiences and varying degrees of institutional access, but are also situated into an academic hierarchy which influences educational outcomes and disadvantages students placed in low-track classes. While this sorting process certainly differs school to school, tracking is entrenched within school culture, which makes it difficult to challenge or alter (Darling-Hammond, 2010; Oakes, Gamoran, & Paige, 1992) and "continues to be one of the most common sources of race and class stratification of opportunities to learn in American schools" (Mickelson & Everett 2008, p. 536).

Secondly, it is difficult for students, especially after 9th grade, to move from a low-track class to a high-track class. Oakes (2005) found opportunities for movement from low-track classes to high-track classes during high school are often limited; upward mobility was practically non-existent. Although subsequent research has found more curricular movement among students, the lack of mobility identified over 25 years ago still exists in many schools. Oakes (2005) reported 8th and 9th grade course placements "launch students onto academic trajectories that most of them follow throughout high school" (Mickelson & Everett, 2008, p. 544). Both Darling-Hammond (1995) and Lucas (1999) confirm after the first two years of high school, opportunities for movement into high-track classes are limited.

Additionally, only a small proportion of students enrolled in low-track classes transition into college preparatory classes during high school and remain enrolled (Kelly, 2008). Consequently, students entering high school in low-track classes are likely to also finish in low-track classes. Because these initial assignments set a ceiling on how far students can progress it is important not only to take note of the various levels of differentiation with a particular discipline, but to also pay close attention to its position within the curricular hierarchy (Oakes, Gamoran, & Paige, 1992). Considered together, this research illuminates the importance of understanding the role of teachers in shaping students' academic pathways and the process teachers use to assign students to academic classes during the first two years of high school.

Numerous researchers have identified the academic differences encountered by students enrolled in different curricular tracks and how this pattern disadvantages certain students while privileging others (Darling-Hammond, 2010; Kelly, 2008; Oakes, 2005; Oakes, Gamoran, & Paige, 1992; Wheelock, 1992). To better understand how this disparity is maintained, it is useful to consider the political dimensions of tracking, or those policies and organizational dynamics shaping teachers' course recommendation decisions. The following discussion situates the importance of paying close attention to how these factors influence both academic attainment and curricular access among low-income students.

Numerous researchers have documented the close relationship between enrolment in high-track classes and college readiness and attendance. Summarizing the consequences of these patterns Mickelson and Heath (1999) conclude, “Tracking creates a discriminatory cycle of restricted educational opportunities for minorities that leads to diminished school achievement that exacerbates racial/ethnic and social class differences in minority and majority school outcomes” (p. 570). Over the last 25 years a large body of sociological and educational research has drawn attention to the inequities associated with course enrolment patterns. Low-income students, however, are still highly underrepresented in classes considered part of a high-quality, rigorous academic curriculum.

Although tracking remains deeply rooted in a majority of American schools, empirical research does not support its widespread use. For example, Slavin’s (1990) analysis of ability grouping at the secondary level found few advantages for students in tracked classes over those of comparable ability in non-tracked classes. Even though the studies included in Slavin’s review were conducted prior to 1970, its continual citation by important scholars suggests his findings have both merit and relevance. Although Gamoran and Mare (1989) also found that academically advanced students benefit from tracking, Oakes (1992) argues these advantages are associated with access to enhanced academic opportunities and high-quality teachers rather than a result of homogenous grouping.

Bearing the concept of tracking in mind, a correlation can be drawn between the choice of an additional language in South Africa. A common assumption held by most parents is that Afrikaans as the first additional language is a better choice than an additional language. This is due in part to the fact that as the language of the former ruling, National Party, Afrikaans was more readily developed as an academic subject with a wide variety of resources available. Whilst a concerted effort has been made in South Africa since 1994 to develop and raise all national languages to an equal standing, it has not been enough to unsettle these deep seated notions.

Thus according to Khanyi (2011), the learners taking part in Afrikaans classes are seen to be the top achievers and the learners enrolled in isiZulu, Xhosa, Sotho or any other indigenous language are relegated to the category of having poor

comprehension of English, being ill-disciplined and generally lacking in overall academic ability.

Oakes (2005) suggests that there are three dimensions that impact on school change namely: the political, technical, and normative. Oakes (1998) defines the political perspective as including power relationships between stakeholders, both within and external to schools. Bearing in mind that schools mirror the tensions and hierarchies of the greater community, teachers, parents, and community members engage in political actions so as to secure advantages for themselves and their children (Oakes, 1998). This reallocation of material, staff and education programs is of prime importance and the redistribution from those who 'have' to those who 'have less' is often tense.

Technical changes in education, involve revisions to the curriculum, pedagogy, assessment and the manner in which the school is organized (Oakes, 1998). Technical concerns would therefore involve the manner in which schools are organized and how teaching occurs (Oakes, 1998). Examples of technical changes may include the addition of a standardised test or the adoption of new textbooks. These changes, whilst critical, are just one part of the transformation process.

Lastly, Oakes' (1998) notion of the normative perspective assists in understanding the values and beliefs that form the basis of policymaking and implementation. While often unspoken, these attitudes and ideologies can be a source of potential conflict for reformers who are concerned with equity (Oakes, 1998). Normative beliefs include perceptions about ability, how difference is treated, and who is considered educable as well as who is not (Oakes, 1998). These beliefs form the foundation for later reform initiatives.

Additionally, Oakes provides the useful construct of third-order changes (1998). While change is a constant in schools, it tends to be focused on policies, procedures and programs. Third-order changes are defined as "fundamental changes which seek to reform core normative beliefs about race, class, intelligence and educability held by educators and others involved with our schools" (Oakes, 1998). Third-order changes pose significant challenges for equity-minded reformers; they require

reconceptualising beliefs about race, merit and fairness. Oakes (1998), however, cautions that not all change is equal. Equity-minded change – change that seeks to achieve equality of opportunity for all students – is particularly risky because it pushes the boundaries of traditionally held views.

Other concepts that are vital to the proper study of this topic are those of the 'zone of mediation and tolerance' (Oakes et al, 1998: p 288). The theory underpinning such concepts is that educational systems channel cultural and political forces at the local, regional, national and global levels via organizational "sites" (in this case, schools) that mediate (i.e. shape, structure, and constrain) the interactions between individuals within the site (Oakes et al,1998:288). As "zones of mediation," South African schools have also shouldered much responsibility for enacting social change post-apartheid.

Oakes et al (1998) argue that the cultural and political forces operating both within and on schools serve to undermine the stability and success of policies that challenge unjust educational practices. An individual's or group's tolerance of and behaviors toward equity therefore depend on their social location. In other words, the "boundaries of the mediation zone" differ by individual, racial group, social class, and other identities, which pose a considerable challenge to any stakeholder aiming to address either ideological differences or cultural resistance to equity-minded policies (Oakes et al, 1998:289).

While Oakes and her colleagues (1998) have written specifically about the political, economic, and social forces that challenge the equity-minded policy of de-tracking, in this research proposal one applies her "zone of normative and political mediation" concept to the practices within desegregated and mixed race schools in South Africa, which, in principle, are perceived to be channels of equity but are struggling with the issue of which language should be adopted.

In using the framework developed by Oakes, one hopes firstly to show the manner in which normative beliefs are imperative to working towards or against educational change. Secondly, the manner in which normative beliefs and assumptions form the

basis through which people relate to one another especially in the context of the school

2.4 Literature review

Parents of learners in the Foundation Phase [Grades 1 to 3] learnt for the first time in a CAPS assessment meeting, that the Department of Basic Education required a First Additional Language as part of the new syllabus. The school that this research will examine has been selected especially as its issue with the recent change to educational legislature stems from the fact that Gonubie Primary School decided on and adopted Afrikaans as such, without duly consulting the parents. This decision was effective as of January 2012, and its consequences have been that Afrikaans was introduced from Grade 1 as the school's official First Additional Language and that any learner who fails Afrikaans will repeat that grade, no matter how well they do in all other subjects.

While this may have been an appropriate curriculum policy decision, This is most unfair for many reasons, one being that firstly this is a primary school based in the Eastern Cape which caters to many Xhosa First Language speakers for whom learning Afrikaans in addition to English for the first time will be an enormous task and secondly as the parents of such learners were not considered when this significant decision was taken.

Whether reforms are embraced or rebuffed rests upon the will and perceived needs of a wide array of school, district and community stakeholders. One can organise these competing factors in terms of three conceptual components. Oakes (2005) suggests that there are three dimensions the political, technical, and normative which impact on school change. Oakes (2005) conceives of the political perspective to include the power relationships between stakeholders, both within schools and from external constituencies. Schools mirror the tensions and hierarchies of the greater community. Teachers, parents, principals and community members engage in political posturing in order to secure advantages for themselves and their children. This reallocation of material, staffing and programs should not be seen as a one dimensional movement of "things" rearranged without consequence. Instead, it is key

to acknowledge that these resources are desirable – be they teachers, materials, or services – and that redistribution from those who 'have' to those who 'have less' is often tense.

Thus changes in education, involve revisions to the curriculum, pedagogy, assessment and school organization (Oakes, 2005). Oakes (1998) cautions that not all change is equal. Equity-minded change – change that seeks to achieve equality of opportunity for all students – is particularly risky because it pushes the boundaries of traditionally held views.

The task of redefining schools as resources for the social and economic advancement of minority groups is a key aspect of the social change that is also underway in post-apartheid South Africa to remedy the subordinate status of blacks and other non-white racial/ethnic groups. Long considered a sociological outlier in issues pertaining to racial inequality because of apartheid's rigid grip (Seidman, 1999), South Africa aims to produce schools where learners of all races may peaceably co-exist, share educational resources, and invest their human capital in the development of a democratic nation.

To understand how the ideological context and tone set by school leadership can undermine the goals of an equity-minded practice such as integration, one argues that it is necessary to know what occurs on the "ground" in schools at both the micro- and organizational levels. On the one hand, schools can be "opened" to historically marginalized groups in terms of access to their academic resources (e.g., teacher quality, computers, books, rigorous curriculum and so forth). On the other hand, school officials may reinforce the strength and rigidity of racial boundaries through daily social and cultural codes and practices. Findings show that the actors most empowered to be "change agents," driven by competition and the perceived potential of lost resources, local contextual norms, and who often belong to dominant racial groups, are often situated within and maintain organizational structures that reinforce their status, power, and interests.

The South African Schools Act (SASA) of 1996 saw an integrated educational system as addressing the collective needs of a fledgling democracy. Given that the

apartheid government had used inequitable educational policies to sustain racial stratification, the SASA (1996) called for a deracialised and unified national system of education, stating: “WHEREAS this country requires a new national system for schools which will redress past injustices in educational provision, … and in so doing lay a strong foundation for the *development of all our people’s talents and capabilities*, advance the democratic transformation of society, combat racism and sexism and all other forms of unfair discrimination and intolerance, *contribute to the eradication of poverty and the economic well-being of society, protect and advance our diverse cultures and languages* …” (SASA, p. 1).

Similarly, South Africa’s 1997 Language in Education Policy relied on this notion that the people of society have an inherent value. The document states, “The new Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, the government, and thus the Department of Education, recognizes that *our cultural diversity is a valuable national asset* and hence is tasked, amongst other things, to promote multilingualism” (Language in Education Policy, 1997). South Africa’s national approach to school integration explicitly aims to use education to unify society as opposed to merely providing equal opportunities to marginalized groups. South African national policies and laws use inclusive language, such as “all learners” and “all our people’s talents and capabilities,” which signaled the government’s recognition that the foundation of a strong democracy is social unification.

Even though South Africa’s desegregation efforts span less than two decades, integration also is far from being achieved. Today the nation continues to face the challenge of achieving school integration and continues to adhere to the belief that policy changes at the macro level will actually achieve integration. But can the nation achieve such noble goals without confronting what political theorist Danielle Allen (2004) refers to as “fossilized distrust” among citizens, who because of the historical social, economic, and political divides may not recognize the common stakes and benefits of citizenship?

In her research, Chaya Herman (1996) sought to understand the manner in which community schools in transitional and unstable situations restructure their educational system in response to internal and external forces. She found that

powerful and concurrent change processes may detract from the community's capacity to manage educational change, and may compel it to seek a "quick-fix solution" to complex ideological, political and social factors (Herman, 2006). Furthermore, in times of rapid change from an oppressive past to an inclusive democracy and open society, new power elites may seize the moment of identity and political uncertainty to reintroduce authoritarianism, thereby being just as dictatorial as the previous social order (Herman, 2006).

Everard Weber (2006) took two very different routes, choosing instead to examine the manner in which change has taken place in terms of teachers' work demands and the role of management therein, at a school he called *Tshwane* High, situated in the South African township of Mamelodi. As well as the manner in which change has been made manifest in Teaching at Merrydale High. His interest in the former school was to understand how to explain power relations, the explicit and implicit agendas, and cooperation between the older and younger members of staff (Weber, 2006). Global influences are evident in the implementation of managerial accountability. National forces are present in the prevailing democratic cultures of governance and management, a product of historical change in South African society and its education systems. The balance, however, of these of these forces is in a state of confusion, with no definitive outcomes (Weber, 2006).

With regard to the latter school his interest was that of analyzing teaching against the background of the legacies of apartheid and the education policies that had been implemented since the rule of the African National Congress [ANC] in 1994. The topics dealt with include the history and politics of teaching in South Africa, school governance, teacher identities, classroom management, curricula and pedagogy, racial diversity and integration (Weber, 2006:p.1). Of particular interest to this research proposal, was the school's attempts at racially integrating well-off and poor learners as well as learners from different racial and socio-economic backgrounds by acting as a 'zone of mediation'.

Two theories consistently appear in the literature on tracking. These theoretical orientations offer important insights about the process of sorting students into academic classes. Human capital theorists argue that tracked schools are aimed at

preparing students for positions in the workplace, providing fair competition for academic advancement, and allocating students into curricular positions based on “objective assessments of relevant abilities, effort, and interest” (Oakes,1995, p. 5). This interpretation brings social and cultural institutions such as the school and family into the realm of economic analysis (Bowles & Gintis, 1975). Within the context of tracking, this perspective suggests students who are motivated, determined, and ambitious can use schooling to increase knowledge and skills, improve status, and directly benefit from labor. Oakes (1985) points out when individual advancement is not achieved explanations often include a “lack of individual motivation, cultural deficiencies, or genetic handicaps” (p. 199).

Conversely, critical theorists such as Apple (2004) and Bowles and Gintis (2011) conceptualize tracking as a sorting mechanism that reproduces societal patterns of race and class stratification. From this perspective schools are understood as institutions that legitimate and distribute certain knowledge. In contrast to human capital theory, which suggests fair meritocratic competition determines academic mobility, reproduction theory maintains schools are constructed around hierarchies of power that disadvantage historically marginalized identities and provide significant benefits for those children in positions of advantage. These advantages can be understood as one’s access to culturally valued resources, knowledge, and experiences that confer status, power, and have “specific laws of accumulation, exchange, and exercise” (Swartz, 1997. p. 8).

While research incorporating these two theoretical perspectives often differs in its purpose, findings, and conclusions, both orientations acknowledge that academic mobility, culturally valued resources, and high status knowledge are unequally distributed among members within society and those with access are in positions of social, political, and economic advantage.

This research proposal hopes to contribute to the above collection that, save for Weber’s work little is known about power and politics at the institutional level.

2.5 Conclusion

This chapter presented an overview of the history, concepts and literature considered of great importance in terms of this research. Before commencing with any research a thorough knowledge of that has been investigated before is crucial.

CHAPTER THREE:
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1. Introduction

In this chapter one will discuss the methodological aspects of this dissertation. It begins by discussing the method and how it influenced the manner in which research would be collected for the dissertation. In addition to a discussion of the research method, the research site and sample will be further elaborated upon. In conclusion the chapter discusses the ethical considerations at play and the limitations of the dissertation.

3.2. Research Method

A fundamental principle of this research project is to pursue the opinions and narrative of stakeholders participating in community media activity and what that can tell us about the practice, rather than what quantitative statistics can attempt to tell us about universal tendencies across the practice. This acknowledges the critique that statistics in themselves aren't contextual answers, and are only hints at root sources of circumstances (Slater and Gidley, 2007). From the outset it was established that the research project would be more descriptive and exploratory and embracing conversation related to another root principle of much worth to community and informal educational practice (Jeffs & Smith, 1999: 21-33).

Educational Research is seen as research that is conducted with the outcome of acquiring dependable and useful information that focuses on the educative process. This is done to find a solution to an identified educational problem or to gain insight into an issue that is not understood. The main goal of this type of research is "to discover general principles or interpretations of behavior that people can use to predict, explain and control events in various educational situations" (Ary, Jacobs and Sorenson, 2010, pg.19).

The main aim of this research methodology is to answer the research questions, namely to understand the school level struggles and to understand the

characteristics of a South African school as a zone of mediation. In order to do so effectively it is best to do qualitative research and particularly case study research.

An ethnographic approach allows for the development of understanding and permits the research to change while it progresses. A disadvantage of this approach, however, is the small sample size, as a result of which the ability to generalize is limited (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009). The data consist of interviews held with 24 individuals who can be made up of parents and staff at the research site. The research strategy used to collect the data is a case study. A case study is conducted because of its usefulness in gaining an understanding of the context and the processes that occur in an international business project involving multiple companies. Moreover, it allows for a rich and detailed set of data (Saunders et al., 2009).

The purpose of this research is descriptive as well as exploratory. For this research it is important to know *what* are the language beliefs, practices are as well as and to find out *why* the choice of an additional language has sparked such conflict.

The research case would be made up of the various stakeholders involved in and affected by the language policy decision in Gonubie Primary School. It is important to note that this school whilst not presenting the most controversial or extreme subject matter is important in the sense that it is rich in information both verbal and written, from stakeholders from all walks of life converging in one school. Specifically, the principal, the members of the School Governing Body, the parents directly opposed to the decision and members of an NGO assisting them in launching a legal case against the decision. For the purposes of this research project it is intended that one will interview a maximum of twenty people.

3.3. Research Site

Given that the dissertation was focused on a specific primary school, the research site was of course Gonubie which is based in the Eastern Cape. The school is located in the central region of the Eastern Province, notably a popular tourist destination and the institution itself is a formerly “whites only” government school.

3.4. Research Sample

When qualitative research seeks to generalize about general issues, representative or naturalistic, sampling is desirable (Aitkinson et al, 1988). Sampling would be going together with population. Population refers to all elements that satisfy the criteria for consideration and inclusion in the study. A sample would then be a specific representation of all the selected participants to be included in this study (Burns & Grove, 2009, p35).

The research sample would be made up of the various stakeholders involved in and affected by the language policy decision in Gonubie Primary School. Specifically, the principal, the members of the School Governing Body, the parents directly opposed to the decision and members of an NGO assisting them in launching a legal case against the decision.

3.5. Data collection

In order to gain the most information from such participants' one will make use of elite structured interviews with which to conduct the researcher's interactions with the participants as well as a focus group interview. The interviews are elite in terms of the fact that specific and key people will be asked for an interview who are key participants in the Gonubie Primary language policy crisis. The interview will consist of no more than fifteen open-ended questions that allow for the researcher to gain a deeper understanding of the issue. The duration of the interview should take no longer than an hour per participant.

All of the interviews essentially followed the same interview protocol. Because of the semi-structured nature of the interviews some of the questions were changed or removed and new questions were added during the period that the interviews took place. Moreover, it is through this flexible and exploratory nature of semi-structured interviews that, as May (1995:93) observes the interviewer has more latitude to probe beyond the answers. The interview questions have been formulated according to Spradley's (1979) ethnographic method. Spradley (1979) identifies two types of interview questions; descriptive and structural questions. Descriptive questions are

general questions about the topic and are intended to encourage the informant to talk freely. Structural questions are useful to verify knowledge that is gained from the interview and possibly add more information to this. According to Spradley (1979) structural questions need to be adapted to each informant. Moreover, Spradley (1979) states the importance to alternate descriptive and structural questions. Asking only structural questions is tedious to the informant and consequently the informant will quickly lose interest. Alternating these types of questions will keep the conversation dynamic for both parties.

In addition, one will make use of document analysis, in terms that one will be examining the South African Schools Act (1996), CAPS language policy document (2011) and the policy documents of Gonubie Primary School. Document analysis is a social research method and is an important research tool in its own right (Bryman, 2001: p 6). Documentary work involves reading lots of written material which relates to some aspect of the social world (Bryman, 2001: p 6). Official documents are intended to be read as objective statements of fact but they are themselves socially produced (Bryman, 2001: p 6).

In terms of this research proposal one intends to examine the aforementioned documents in terms of semiotics, discourse and interpretative analysis. Semiotics is a science that studies the life of signs in society (Bryman, 2001: p 7). In semiotics, one seeks to connect the signifier (an expression which can be words, a picture or sound) with what is signified (another word, description or image) (Bryman, 2001: p 7). The use of language is noted as it is considered to be a description of actions. As part of language, certain signs match up with certain meanings. Semiotics seeks to understand the underlining messages in visual texts. It is related to discourse analysis and forms the basis for interpretive analysis (Bryman, 2001: p 7).

Discourse analysis is concerned with the production of meaning through talk and texts (Bryman, 2001: p 8). Language is viewed as the topic of the research and how people use language to construct their accounts of the social world is important (Bryman, 2001: p 8). Finally interpretative analysis aims to capture hidden meaning and ambiguity. It examines the manner in which messages are delivered whether explicit or implicit, (Bryman, 2001: p 8).

A data collection method consisting of the blend of these two different methodologies ensures trustworthiness of the account of the case by adding to its validity and reliability

3.6 Data Analysis

Data analysis is the process of bridging order, structure and meaning to the mass of collected data. Although it is described by De Vos (2007; p; 334) as being “time consuming” amongst others, qualitative data analysis on the other hand is also regarded by the same author as a ‘search for general statements about relationships among categories of data’. The study further involves an inseparable relationship between data analysis and data collection. Cresswell in De Vos (2007) states that classifying means taking the text or qualitative information apart and looking for categories, themes or dimension of information. Coding data is the formal representation of analytical thinking.

Data analysis is the process of making sense of the information collected, for this process to make sense. From this description, the researcher would then follow a process of organizing data into categories, identifying patterns and relationships amongst these categories. The process suggests then that thematic content analysis procedure will have to be used. The researcher will draw out recurring patterns in the collected data which may eventually lead to themes being drawn as well. Coding would then be quite essential for this research proposal, meaning, the data collected will be coded by the researcher when or during the analysis of data by paying particular attention to common themes.

Coding is important for this proposal because it will assist the researcher to develop, change where necessary and recreate data for a better provision for various analyses (Burns and Grove 2009: 529). Categorization is an interpretation in terms of common themes and the process of ‘organizing data into categories and identifying patterns and relationships among the categories’ to make meaning from the data (Macmillan and Schumacher, 2010; p 367).

In short the transcripts of the semi structured interviews will be examined for common and recurring themes and patterns by the researcher which will form the basis of the categories used by the researcher to organize the raw data which is known as a process called coding (Atkinson et al, 1988). These themes and patterns will then be ranked according to the number of times they appear in a process known as editing (Atkinson et al, 1988). With the most common and repetitive being reflective of the universal sample (Young, 1956, p.38). Thereafter tabulation will occur with the results of the data made available in the format of a table for accessibility (Atkinson et al, 1988).

3.7. Validity and Reliability

Validity is defined by Mouton (1996:112) as the best approximation of truth while reliability infers consistency or stability of data over a period of time. Reliability and validity are “vital concepts in surveys and experiments” but according to Bassey (1999:74) they are not vital in case study research. This is because the concept of validity can be problematic in case study research for the following reasons. Case study research is chosen because of an interest in a particular singularity and not because it is a typical example that would be meaningful in other contexts where external validity would apply. Furthermore in case study research there are no cause and effect relationships where internal examinations can be made. In case study research people’s construction of reality is being observed and for the case study researcher “what seems to be true is more important than what is true” (Merriam 1988:167). The reliability of a case study is also sometimes questioned, because in case study it is not always possible or desirable to repeat the study in order to verify the results.

Lather (cited in Dison 1998:19) suggests a further type of validity, namely catalytic validity, as being appropriate for research. Catalytic validity refers to the degree of change that has taken place in the situation while the research is still in progress. An example of this is referred to in Chapter Four. In place of the term validity Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggested the use of the term of “data trustworthiness”. Triangulation is a method that is used to establish data trustworthiness.

Triangulation as described by Denzin (1970) is the use of more than a single method for collecting data when studying a particular aspect of human behavior. One of the motives for using multiple methods for data collection is to increase the validity of the observations of the study.

Triangulation is a means whereby the researcher assesses the integrity of the inferences made from collected data. In order to do this the researcher may use interviews, observations and questionnaires to study the same unit and compare the results. In so doing the researcher is able to identify different ways in which phenomena have been seen. This strategy may reveal that the flaws in the one method may be the strengths of another (Merriam 1988:69). For the purposes of this research validity will be ensured by reviewing the official and unofficial sources, reports and evaluations produced by government departments, media agencies and stakeholders concerned.

Although the validity or reliability of the perceptions were not in all instances verified, the researcher concluded that, because many of the reports came to similar conclusions, this in itself could be regarded as proof of the relative validity and reliability of the perceptions and experiences described in the reports.

3.8 Ethical Considerations

For a researcher to conduct their research, ethics clearance needs to be issued. This has been granted by the University of the Witwatersrand Ethics Committee. In addition, the Eastern Cape Department of Education was approached for their permission to conduct research as Gonubie is a public school based in that province. It is important to note that due to the sensitive nature of the case at present, every care was taken to ensure that the process of gathering information was neither threatening nor invasive to the participants concerned.

To ensure that the participants are well informed and understand the ethics aspect of this research, each was given a letter. In the aforementioned letter, certain stipulations were made such as the assurance that all information generated during this research project will be kept confidential and anonymous, thus creating the

space for honesty and trust throughout the process. In addition, the data will be stored for five years in the researcher's possession in a safe.

3.9. Limitations of the study

The generalisations made from this research are subject to the following limitations:

1. The case is based on one school, Gonubie Primary School.
2. The target population is limited to the Principal, teachers, SGB, parents, legal representatives and learners of Gonubie Primary School.
3. This research is prone to the interpretation of the researcher. As such it is most important to ensure that this is not affected by any researcher bias. It is also important to ensure that the logic of the inferences made as a result of the interviews and data analysis and the credibility of the recurrent themes that are identified are checked. This will be done in the form of an external audit by the Supervisor.

3.10 Conclusion

This chapter began by describing the goals and methodology of the current research. Specific attention was given to the theory and nature of the focus group interviews as they were the main research instrument and gatherer of the greater proportion of data. The chapter concludes with the methodological limitations of the research and a description of the participation of the school.

CHAPTER FOUR:
HISTORICAL EDUCATIONAL INFLUENCES ON GONUBIE PRIMARY SCHOOL

4.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on analysing information sourced about the case so as to gain an understanding of the various interpretations of conflict and power in the Gonubie Primary School language policy issue.

Language is the most important means of human interaction. Thus language and cultural rights are central to all human rights in the modern world. Beyond the issue of rights, it is important to note that language and literacy are very crucial for the development of a society. This occurs as a society develops into modernity when its citizens are literate in the languages of the masses. Historically, the jump towards expanded knowledge production and reproduction in societies has only been possible when the languages of social majorities have been understood.

On that note, the question of language in South Africa is one of the unresolved issues of post-Apartheid South Africa. In its present form, its origins are tied to the settler-colonial system, represented by the imposition of Afrikaans and English on the African population. The effects of this imposition are still there today and are made manifest in the state. Under Apartheid, the two languages of the white minority, namely, Afrikaans and English, held sway over and above the indigenous African languages. While English retained the supremacy it had as the language of British colonial power, Afrikaans was systematically developed with enormous state resources and blessing into a second official language. Its social role covered the entire range of functions, which any official language in a developed First World society would have.

The purpose of this study is to contribute to an awareness of localized patterns of political conflict over language. By providing new insight into conflict generated between the struggle for dominance by the majority and the struggle for equity by the minority in an attempt to achieve a more accommodating and diverse school.

4.2 A history of South African education

There are two fundamental sources from which language derives its power, i.e., the ability of the individuals or groups to realize their intentions by means of language or, conversely, the ability of individuals or groups to impose their agendas on others. For human beings to survive by engaging in the production process they have to cooperate and in order to do so, they have to communicate. Language is the main instrument of communication at our disposal; consequently, the specific language in which the production processes take place becomes the language of power. Thus the relationship between language policy, class and power becomes evident.

For reasons connected with the colonial history of South Africa, the language of power in post-Apartheid South Africa is undoubtedly English. Afrikaans continues to play a secondary role in the processes of economic production in the formal economy even though there have been determined attempts to reduce its significance in this domain as well as in other high-status domains. South Africa is one of the most heterogeneous countries in the world. The Bill of Human Rights, as contained in the South African Constitution (RSA, 1996a: Section 30) guarantees equal status for all eleven official languages. The languages are Pedi, Sesotho, Tswana, Swazi, Venda, Tsonga, Afrikaans, English, Ndebele, Xhosa, and Zulu. In order to understand this state of affairs, it is necessary to provide a brief overview of the South African language-in-education.

Section 37 of the Constitution of the Union of South Africa gave recognition to the principle of Dutch (and later Afrikaans) and English as medium of instruction for white learners. Home-language instruction had been — with the exception of Natal, where the choice regarding the language of instruction lay with the parents — compulsory for all white learners up to and including Standard [Grade Six] Four. After South Africa had become a republic in 1961, the arrangements with regard to the medium of instruction were upheld in white schools (Chick, 1992:275-276). Act 39 of 1969 brought about uniformity in all four provinces. Thus home-language instruction, whether in Afrikaans or English, became the norm (Beukes, 1995:42).

The Bantu Education Act, Act 47 of 1953, brought about two totally separate education systems, one for white and one for black learners. According to Truter (2004:164), this resulted in a dichotomy of two separate cultures that functioned separately from primary school up to university level. This was also the case with the language policy, because there was a separate system in the language policy for white and black learners. The Bantu Education Act determined that the use of the home language as medium of instruction was compulsory up to and including Standard Six [Grade Eight]. Both Afrikaans and English were compulsory school subjects from the first year of school. From Standard Seven [Grade Nine], English and Afrikaans were used as medium of instruction on a 50:50 basis (Chick, 1992:275). Regardless of the educational advantage of home language instruction, there was much resistance to the implementation of this policy:

In the minds of the black community, such advantage was overshadowed by the realization that educational motives were secondary to political ones. Consistent with apartheid ideology, mother-tongue instruction prepared the different language groups for separate existence … the policy served to divide and rule black people (Chick, 1992:275).

Those who opposed the language policy of the National Party Government shared the view that the policy not only had negative consequences, but would also lead to the economic and educational disempowerment of black people. Desai (2001:330) stated that “the use of African languages … was often perceived as an attempt to ghettoize African learners and deny them access to the mainstream of South African life”. Furthermore, the policy placed a ceiling on opportunities for development, because it was expected of black people to acquire academic skills in two “foreign” languages (Chick, 1992:275).

The ideological resistance to Afrikaans, which was seen as the language of the oppressor, culminated in the 1976 uprisings. This led to the scrapping of Afrikaans, as well as black home languages as medium of instruction in black schools (Truter, 2004:164). After the uprisings, black schools, in accordance with Act 90 of 1979, followed a policy of decreasing bilingualism. Consequently, a start was made with instruction through the medium of the black home language, but gradually this was

replaced with English as medium of instruction (Truter, 2004:163; Beukes, 1995:53; Chick, 1992:276). Official 1978 statistics (cited in Beukes, 1995:53) indicated that during that year, more than 96 per cent of all black learners were taught through the medium of English from Standard 5 [Grade Seven] onwards.

During freedom movement gatherings, the 1985 National Forum and the 1990 Harare Language Workshop, amongst others, consultations with regard to language in education took place. During these gatherings the resistance to Afrikaans, the importance of English and the necessity of the development of the indigenous African languages dominated discussions (Chick, 1992:276-279). Already as early as 1955, the ANC (s.a.:1), as expressed in the *Freedom Charter*, held the view that "all people shall have equal right to use their own languages". Education legislation, as well as policy documents that were accepted after the 1994 elections, would not only make provision for this principle, but would also strive to accommodate the language preferences of learners.

According to Heugh (2006:63), education changes after 1994 contained the promise of justice, the promotion and development of multilingualism and home-language instruction, parental choice and a cognitively enriched curriculum. After a thorough analysis of the policy implementation plan Heugh, however, reaches the conclusion that the education and language acquisition theory upon which the language of instruction policy has to be based, has been ignored or presented incorrectly. According to her, this may result in the current education practice promising failure and unjustness on a scale that will allow apartheid education to appear good in comparison (Heugh, 2006: 73). On the contrary, De Klerk (2004:66) reaches the conclusion, after a fundamental analysis of the education-in-language policy of 1997, that the successful implementation of the policy can contribute to the establishment of an education system aimed at achieving: a fair and equal education system; the correction of the legacy of the past; the attainment of quality education for all South African citizens; and the endeavour to maintain education in South Africa for the future.

The South African Schools Act (RSA, 1996b: Section 6) and the National Education Policy (RSA, 1996c: Section 3(4) have as a basis the right to education for all and the

right to education in the language choice of the learner or the learner's parents (where this education is fairly feasible), which is stipulated in the Constitution (RSA 1996a: Section 30). The former proves to Duvenhage (2006:136) that access to basic education for all, as well as the right to education in the language of the learner's choice is very high on the list of transformation priorities of the ANC government.

The ANC government regards language as an instrument to advance education and political transformation and to establish democracy. For this reason, the Department of Education (DoE, 2001:29) is committed to the promotion of multilingualism: "Speaking the language of other people not only facilitates meaningful communication, but also builds openness and respect as barriers are broken down". Where the NP government had, amongst other things, promoted Afrikaans as an objective, the ANC government was in favour of the promotion of African languages: "Given the historical onus on black learners to learn English and Afrikaans, it is reciprocally important now that non-African learners acquire at least one African language" (DoE, 2001: 29).

Besides the challenges that the development of an African language would pose, the negative legacy of the 1953 Bantu Education Act has resulted in the chances being slim that there will be a (great) demand for the use of African languages as languages of instruction in the future or even in the distant future. As the deep-seated fear that the use of (several) African languages could lead to division, the perception that African languages are inferior, the lack of infrastructure and the high cost of the development of languages (Mda, 2000:162-167; Chick, 1992:283), Desai (2001:326) mentions that as long as African languages are not used in the legislative, executive and juridical government structures, "they are not going to be regarded with pride by those who use them and will continue to have a low status". Desai (2001:326) warns that it could lead to the marginalisation of those with these home languages.

As a result of the antagonism of the majority of South African learners towards Afrikaans, which they viewed as the language of the oppressor, English was the language of choice for these learners after the 1976 uprising. English maintained this

privileged position after 1994, because “English … is so indelibly inscribed within new constellations of power in South Africa” (Balfour, 1999:105).

Prior to 1994 the education policies and practices in South Africa were a reflection of the political dispensation in the country. Black and white learners not only had separate schools, but also separate policies regarding the medium of instruction. Political and economic considerations played a key role in this regard with resistance to the language policy leading to far-reaching changes. Only after 1997, the language preferences of learners in South Africa received any recognition for the first time. After 1994, in the spirit of democracy, official, as well as educational, status was given to eleven languages. Deep-seated distrust and fear, that home-language instruction would lead to impoverishment, social and political isolation and disempowerment, resulted in the majority of South African learners preferring English as language of instruction and not their home languages. The education-in-language situation in the classroom has therefore changed very little since 1994.

4.3 Education in the Eastern Cape

Bearing in mind that the Eastern Cape Department of Education falls under the umbrella of the Department of Basic Education according to the organisational structures of governance in South Africa, it has a mandate to implement all national policies as instructed. Therefore in order to understand the current ‘languages of instruction’ policy challenge faced by Gonubie Primary School, one must first appreciate the initial formulations of language policy in the post-apartheid era. The Language in Education Policy (LiEP) – issued in terms of the National Education Policy Act (NEPA) and the South African Schools Act (SASA) – contained a number of critical provisions.

Firstly, section 6 required all learners to learn one of the official languages in Grade 1 and 2, and only required them to learn a second language from Grade 3 onwards. In terms of Section 5 of the Norms and Standards Regarding Language Policy, published in terms of Section 6(1) of SASA, school governing bodies (SGBs) are required to promote multilingualism through the use of one or more languages of instruction, and, where possible, by offering additional languages as fully fledged

subjects. Section 6(2) indicated these language norms were subject to the “40/35 rule”. The “40/35 rule”, holds that where less than 40 requests for instruction in a language in Grades 1 to 6 exist, and less than 35 requests occur in Grades 7 to 12 for such instruction, the onus to provide instruction shifts to the provincial department of education to address these language choices.

A significant indicator of a shift in the language policy debate occurred in 2011. The Department of Basic Education published a report on the status of language of learning and teaching in South African public schools. Based on annual school survey data from 1998 to 2007, the study tracks changes in learners’ home language, their language of learning and teaching, their study of additional languages.

To ensure that all non-Afrikaans African language speakers become sufficiently proficient in English, CAPS has required that all schools identify a First Additional Language. In most instances, our public schools will choose English. They now teach English in oral and written form from Grade 1. The new curriculum policy explicitly demands that every school offers between two and three hours per week of instruction for the First Additional Language in Grades 1 and 2, and between three and four hours per week for the First Additional Language in Grade 3. The primary purpose of this additional FAL instruction is to develop ‘listening and speaking, thinking and reasoning and language structure and use, which are integrated into all four languages skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing), reading and phonics, writing and handwriting.’ The CAPS Foundation Phase policy specifies that Grade 1 teachers should impart listening and speaking skills for one-and-a-half hours a week, and spend an additional half an hour on reading and phonics for the First Additional Language. By Grade 3, the policy requires that teachers spend one hour on listening and speaking ability, one hour on reading and phonics proficiency, and half an hour respectively on writing and language use.

However, as several recent court cases and a significant number of unreported SGB disputes have demonstrated, the implementation of FAL has not been as straightforward as expected. The linguistic, racial and class heterogeneity and

stratification of our society has led to a number of unanticipated conflicts between SGBs, parents, learners and provincial HoDs over early stage multilingual tuition.

4.4 A contextual overview of the School

Gonubie Primary School has an interesting language history. The school came into existence in 1930 with thirty learners and one teacher with English as the sole medium of instruction. In 1966 an Afrikaans principal was appointed to the school which had then grown to having ninety-one learners enrolled, three of whom were Afrikaans speaking. A year later there were five Afrikaans learners who were taught as one class in the foyer of the school by the principal, himself. It was then decided that the school would adopt a parallel medium with both English and Afrikaans being the language of teaching and learning for learners in those respective groups. At the time that this decision was taken it was the Nationalist Party's goal to implement a language policy which sought to promote Afrikaans as the dominant language of the country (Alexander 1989:21).

By 1978, enrolment at the school had risen to three hundred and thirty learners with twenty per cent of the learners coming from Afrikaans speaking families. Whilst the National Party was in power, no black learners were permitted to enroll at either English or Afrikaans medium schools as per their separationist policies, thus there were no Xhosa-speaking children at the school and therefore no need to teach the language. School enrolment numbers grew steadily and in 1989 there were five hundred and eighty learners at the school of whom twenty two per cent were Afrikaans speakers. With the imminent collapse of Apartheid, policies had begun to change to allow schools to make the choice of whether or not to enroll black children. On the basis of the policy changes, the school chose to permit selected learners belonging to other racial groups to attend the school. The first Xhosa-speaking child was enrolled at the school in 1989.

Once schools were declared open to all learners regardless of race, enrolments at the school escalated and, by 1998, six hundred and twenty-nine English, Xhosa and Afrikaans speaking learners had enrolled at Gonubie Primary School. Pressure, due to accommodating a diverse learner body, forced School Management to decide on

what would be the most economically viable teacher/pupil ratio. The number of learners being taught through the medium of Afrikaans had dropped to only seven-and-a-half per cent of the total enrolment. One of the reasons for the phasing out of the Afrikaans classes was economic, in that there was no need to employ a fulltime teacher for less than sixty learners, but this decision also had demographic implications as there were [and still are] no Afrikaans-speaking public schools in the immediate area. The parents of Afrikaans-speaking learners needed to decide whether to relocate their children to schools where Afrikaans was the language of teaching and learning or whether they should remain at Gonubie Primary School and be taught in English. The majority of Afrikaans-speaking families decided to remain at the school while about ten learners moved to other schools.

In 2000, the only remaining Afrikaans class was a combined Grade Six and Seven class of twenty-four Afrikaans-speaking learners. By previous agreement with the parents, this class was phased out at the start of the 2001 school year. In the year 2000, sixty-five per cent of learners were English speaking, twenty-five per cent were IsiXhosa speakers and only ten per cent spoke Afrikaans at home. In spite of the change in the pupil population at this former Model C School, the composition of the teaching staff has remained fairly constant with the exception of two Xhosa- speaking educators being appointed. Both were responsible for all the Xhosa language lessons in the school. The current composition of the school learner body is sixty per cent Xhosa speaking, thirty per cent English speaking and ten per cent Afrikaans speaking.

Despite the above statistics, when current legislature required that all schools decide on a First Additional Language for the Foundation Phase, the principal and staff together made a decision to remain with Afrikaans. After convincing the SGB it was all but ratified that the school's [stated and implemented] language policy would be English and Afrikaans.

4.5 Interviews

All of the interviews essentially followed the same interview protocol. As a result of the semi-structured nature of the interviews some of the questions were changed or

removed and new questions were added during the period that the interviews took place. Moreover, it is through this flexible and exploratory nature of semi-structured interviews that, as May (1995:93) observes the interviewer has more latitude to probe beyond the answers. The interview questions have been formulated according to Spradley's (1979) ethnographic method.

Spradley (1979) identifies two types of interview questions; descriptive and structural questions. Descriptive questions are general questions about the topic and are intended to encourage the informant to talk freely. Structural questions are useful to verify knowledge that is gained from the interview and possibly add more information to this. According to Spradley (1979) structural questions need to be adapted to each informant. Moreover, Spradley (1979) states the importance to alternate descriptive and structural questions. Asking only structural questions is tedious to the informant and consequently the informant will quickly lose interest. Alternating these types of questions will keep the conversation dynamic for both parties.

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In order to gain the most information from such participants' one will make use of elite structured interviews with which to conduct interactions with the participants as well as a focus group interview. The interviews are elite in terms of the fact that specific and key people will be asked for an interview who are key participants in the Gonubie Primary language policy concern. The interview consisted of no more than fifteen open-ended questions that allowed for the researcher to gain a deeper understanding of the issue. The duration of the interview took no longer than an hour per participant.

4.6 Participants

The participants selected for this study were parents and teachers who were willing to participate. The sample being made up of both teachers and parents who were in favor of having Afrikaans as the FAL, in favor of having Xhosa as the FAL or neutral regarding this decision as their main concern was that English as the School's medium of instruction was not affected by either decision. Given that the School had been under the spotlight in local and provincial media, the principal, Mr. Cyril Prinsloo and the SGB were uninterested in taking part in the data collection process. Instead they referred to duties of confidentiality to the School as to why they could not lawfully participate.

RESPONSE OF THE SCHOOL PRINCIPALS [PAST AND PRESENT]

Mr. Cyril Prinsloo was selected as the principal of Gonubie Primary School in 2012 at the beginning of the conflict. At this time the former principal, a much beloved teacher and head master for many years, decided to retire. The latter had been instrumental in convincing the SGB that selecting Afrikaans as the FAL of the School was an expected decision which no one would contest.

Principal Prinsloo, having inherited a potentially problematic situation from his predecessor resolved to adopt a no-nonsense, business as usual attitude. When confronted with requests by black parents regarding the School's FAL decision, he would either be engaged in meetings, unavailable via telephone and e-mail or would

plead that as the principal he had no real say in the matter but was simply an administrative figure.

In summation, the parents in favor of having the option of IsiXhosa offered at the school felt largely abandoned by the Principal. They felt that he was cleverly trying to underplay the significance of the decision in order to stop the growing momentum for change the majority demographic was attempting to gather under the leadership of Mrs. Ayanda Duma. This was especially the case as Principal Prinsloo always seemed to make time to listen to and address the concerns of those parents and staff in favor of having Afrikaans as the FAL, especially the wealthier parents [those who were able to pay their school fees in full at the beginning of the academic year].

Upon analysis it would seem that Principal Prinsloo represents the traditional archetype of the white, male principal. In that he was firmly rooted in the conviction that continuity and the status quo were in the best interests of the School and learners and thus Afrikaans as FAL was the best decision. His avoidance of meeting and engaging with the parents of IsiXhosa learners reflected an eagerness not to become entangled in a war over race, culture and language especially with a female opponent.

RESPONSE OF THE SCHOOL GOVERNING BODY [SGB]

The role of the SGB in this conflict was that of a tyranny of a minority. A body made up of eight individuals, all white and in favor of adopting Afrikaans as the School's FAL. Incidentally all the individuals serving on the SGB shared similar backgrounds and in some cases engaged in activities outside of the school such as church committees, sporting teams, and so forth.

The role of the SGB, as initially envisaged was to create a partnership between parents and schools as formalized by the SASA. Section 18 identifies parents as the official partners in the governance of their children's school. Governance being defined as any activity which provides parents with the opportunity of taking part in decision-making about school programmers which include goal setting, development

and implementation of programmer activities, assessment, personnel decisions and funding allocations.

However, the actions of this group would seem to have been largely motivated by their own self-interest in terms of securing for themselves and their children what they believe to be the best education possible. That this education is largely Eurocentric and devoid of any accommodation of indigenous knowledge systems [IKS] is no coincidence but rather an indication that the members of the group saw very little educational use in adopting such systems. This was especially the case as they had been the products of a system they were trying to maintain and managed to be very successful both professionally and personally.

The significance of the SGB being an all-white and upper middle class body and mostly consisting of former learners is most significant. Having experienced this system of education themselves they were of the belief that it was the best version. Due to political changes in the country they might have had to accept that their children would not attend a largely homogenous school as they had once done, but were willing to concede this if they were able to ensure that the school would be run exactly as they wanted it to be. As such the SGB was deaf to any opposition to any decisions they had ratified such as the selection of the FAL, the date for SGB re-election and the candidates who would run for election into the parent organization.

The analysis of the significance of the actions of the SGB reflects the superficial transformational change that most institutional organizations have undergone. Acceptance into exclusive schools, clubs and echelons of society is permitted in as much as the outsider is willing to assimilate completely into the existing structures, traditions and hegemony. Based on the inequities of the past, black parents in post-Apartheid South Africa were only too willing to acquiesce if it ensured a better standard of education for their children. Their children, however, as products of the status quo, were determined to ensure that things would be better and more equitable for the next generation.

PARENTS

The parents of the majority of the learners who attend Gonubie Primary School are professional men and women who live in the suburbs surrounding the school and are proud to be associated with this 'English school'. White parents are exclusively represented on the SGB and, although little change has taken place in the school to accommodate learners from diverse language backgrounds, Xhosa-speaking parents have up until this point seemed more than satisfied with the status quo.

Garson (1999) suggests that parents such as these are prepared to pay dearly for education in former Model C schools as they want their children to be taught by white educators, who were better educated and as such are better teachers. Christie (in Garson 1999:32) believes that "while race is still a primary concern in schools, class will increasingly dictate … parental choices". These middle class parents are keen to support their children's education and have high aspirations for their future. It is these aspirations that promote very strong responses to the issue of selecting Xhosa as the First Additional Language of the school.

The main result of this research is that proficiency in English or Afrikaans and for isiXhosa parents this is more important than proficiency in the mother tongue. Both groups of parents felt that it was sufficient for their children to be 'taught' their mother tongue at home.

Some parents felt that by choosing Xhosa as opposed to Afrikaans as the First Additional Language at school they are demonstrating a profound commitment to multilingualism. Indeed some English-speaking parents feel very strongly that more time needed to be allocated to the teaching and learning of Xhosa in the initial stages of school:

However it must be noted that for various reasons parents in this research were undecided whether Xhosa or Afrikaans should be the First Additional Language of the school. English parents differed in their choice of language. Some were satisfied with the status quo because they felt that there was a greater need for South Africans to speak Afrikaans:

RESPONSES OF AFRIKAANS PARENTS IN FAVOUR OF AFRIKAANS

The range of responses from the Afrikaans parents indicate that whilst there are some who do not see this as a big issue, or at least one that negated the legal intervention which ultimately resolved the conflict, others are taking the choice of another language over Afrikaans very personally indeed. It is important to note that most of the parents who are opposed to accepting Xhosa at the school are farmers whilst those who are in agreement or who have no real desire to enforce Afrikaans only are white collar professionals.

They made the following comments in the interview with the researcher which provided very poignant glimpses into the deeper significance behind this decision.

“Hoekom is dit alytd ons se skuld and hoeveel meer moet ons opgee?”
“Why is it always our fault and how much more do they want?”

“Ek het nie ‘n probleem met die taal maar goeie genade wat kan a kind met Xhosa doen in hierdie land?”
“I have no problem with the language itself but what on earth can a child do in this country with isiXhosa?”

By examining the statements closely it would seem that the parents concerned seem to feel oppressed for wanting to their children to learn Afrikaans. Especially as this language has the dubious reputation of being associated with the Nationalist Party and the architects of Apartheid. For many it represents years of oppression and domination of one racial group over another, for others it represents a language and culture that is one of the smallest in the world and if unprotected is in danger of dying out.

Another perspective offered is linked to the development of the language during the Apartheid era, where it was publically funded and given the necessary resources to become a language of business, administration and one recognised as having an important place in South African society due to its ability to be captured in print for a large market. Other indigenous languages have not fared so well and as such have

remained rooted in daily communication and maintaining oral traditions. For many job vacancies around the country it is assumed that being bilingual means having the ability to engage in English and Afrikaans. Being able to converse in an African language is an advantage but not a requirement.

Therefore according to Ridge (1996:29) "South Africans thus face the far from unique task of both teaching and seeking to promote and develop the other national languages" one of which is Afrikaans. While there are Afrikaans-speaking parents who believe that it is important for their children to attend schools that uphold their culture, beliefs and identity, the Afrikaans-speaking parents in the current research were concerned about the maintenance and future of the Afrikaans language with a contender in the form of isiXhosa.

RESPONSES OF AFRIKAANS PARENTS IN FAVOUR OF ISIXHOSA

"Hoekom kan ons nie die twee tale leer nie?"
"What's wrong with offering two languages?"

"Dit sal mos lekker wees om te luister na ander mense se praatjies wanneer hulle praat"
"It would be good to understand what they say about us when they talk"

At face value it would seem that these parents are quite open minded and liberal about the introduction of Xhosa as a FAL in the school but only if the option of Afrikaans still remains for them to choose. Also their reasoning for allowing their children to learn the language is largely biased and represents a suspicious nature towards black people. They assume that whenever a person speaks in their indigenous language that they are speaking disparagingly about the Afrikaner.

Also noteworthy is the fact that they can see no purpose beyond that of basic communication for the use of the indigenous language. The language would help their children to understand what is being said to him/her and other than that have no viable socioeconomic advantages.

RESPONSES OF AFRIKAANS PARENTS NEUTRAL REGARDING THE FAL

“My kind sal Afrikaans leer en praat, ander mense kan vir hulle kinders besluit. Dis net reg”
“My child will learn and speak Afrikaans, other people can decide for their children. This is the right way.”

“Die hele punt is ‘n mens moet vir hulle kind kies, ek kan en wou nie hierdie besluit vir ‘n ander mens maak nie.”
“The main issue is that someone must choose for their child. I cannot and will not make this decision for someone else”

Unlike the parents in favour of Xhosa as a FAL for seemingly insignificant reasons this group would seem to have a more respectful understanding towards this issue. However they are very clear that regardless of how the School decided to resolve the matter the main issue that they were concerned with was not that a particular language was learnt above another but rather that the parents had a choice in which language was selected. A choice that they refer to the other, “black”, parents also having. As such they chose to abstain from involving themselves in the ensuing and escalating conflict.
This group would seem to be indicative of most of the Afrikaner parent body at the school, who felt that as long as parents were able to exercise some agency in the decision of the FAL and the medium of instruction remained the same, there was no need for any conflict.

RESPONSES OF ENGLISH PARENTS IN FAVOUR OF AFRIKAANS

“I can’t speak this Xhosa language – who will help my child with homework?’

“Do the Xhosa’s have any universities? No, education to them pretty much ends at Initiation School.”

“I agree that language is culturally important but for goodness sake, schools are not responsible for teaching this. Keep your cultural problems to yourself and leave the children out of this!”

The comments of English parents in favour of having Afrikaans as the FAL, proved most interesting as they were for the most part completely self-centered responses. Parents were less interested in the equity of the decision than the effect that it would have on their children presently and in the future.

For many a main concern was that of being able to assist their children with homework. One parent stated that she would have to ask her domestic worker to assist the child and this would be an added expense as “… these people want to be paid for every little thing”. At this point I was unsure as to whether the parent was referring to her domestic worker or to Xhosa people in general. When asked to clarify herself the parent became flustered and asked to be excused for the bathroom.

Other comments made by such parents were that Afrikaans presents their children with more educational opportunities in terms of tertiary study. Two parents, in separate interviews mentioned that at least with Afrikaans their child could attend the University of Johannesburg, Potchefstroom, Pretoria and Stellenbosch [historically Afrikaans speaking tertiary institutions]. Interestingly the University of the Free State was not referred to, perhaps as they desired not to link themselves to controversial racist practices such as black face pantomimes and the derogatory treatment of cleaners by Afrikaans students at this institution.

Such parents displayed a shallow understanding of Xhosa culture and education, believing that for this cultural group all learning ends with initiation school [a cultural practice where teenage boys are instructed in traditional practices and circumcised and thereafter considered to be adults in the community at large]. When compared with Afrikaans which offered the potential of tertiary study it becomes apparent why they supported the decision for Afrikaans as the FAL.

One parent, believed the conflict was politically motivated and that any decision taken by the school is blown out of proportion. He stated that teaching a child about

his/her culture was the job of the parent and not the school and that parents had no right to force this on the teacher. On further probing it was determined that this parent was a teacher in a private school experiencing similar problems and he felt out of his depth teaching about cultures and traditions that he did not follow. However as parents at that school paid school fees of a significant amount, that which they wanted was always done out of fear that they would leave and take their money elsewhere.

On further reflection it seemed that this group of parents was either the least informed or the most biased as a result of keen campaigning by certain members of the SGB. They proved entirely unwilling to consider the perspective of Mrs. Duma and her associates and provided similar responses to questions almost as though following the same script from an e-mail circulated amongst a select group of individuals.

RESPONSES OF ENGLISH PARENTS IN FAVOUR OF XHOSA

“I can’t speak any African language and that works to my detriment, if my child could speak Xhosa, he would be infinitely better off. Especially with things like BEE”

“Let the parents decide, I think for the amount of money we pay surely the children can learn both or have a choice, I mean school fees go up every year, why not hire an Afrikaans and Xhosa teacher?”

Parents who were in favour of selected Xhosa seemed to have had ulterior motives encouraging this choice. For the most part these proved economic in nature. The first parent thought that knowing the language would avail their child to more opportunities as an adult in business mentioning BEE [now known as BBBEE – Broad Based Black Economic Empowerment]. To this parent, the value of the language was only that it could possibly endear his child to a black business partner who in his words “have all the money and tenders these days because of their cronies in government”.

The other parent believed that as the fees of the school were quite substantial, both languages could be offered quite easily. In fact she was incensed that so much of her private time was occupied by reading and engaging with material, sent by the opposing stakeholders, related to this issue which in her mind was a non-issue.

The parents interviewed proved to be the least engaging, they saw straightforward issue which at its core was financially motivated and could be solved. The deeper issues of power, agency and redress did not feature at all.

RESPONSES OF ENGLISH PARENTS NEUTRAL REGARDING THE FAL

“Afrikaans or Xhosa makes no difference to me. My only concern is will my child be able to pass, go to high school and get a Matric certificate.”

“We don’t intend to stay long in South Africa anyway. As soon as we can get our papers together we’re going to New Zealand. There the Government focuses on real issues like unemployment not if children can speak a black language.”

The structured inequalities of South African society are played out in language, and specifically in English (de Klerk, 1997: 114). Despite recent changes in the country to redress former linguistic imbalances by improving the status of the indigenous languages and down-grading English and Afrikaans, the desire to master English has not declined, as a result the parents of these learners find themselves in a privileged position. The issue at hand doesn’t really concern them as regardless of the outcome their children will still be taught in their mother language.

Most interesting was the comment by one couple who had decided to seek “greener pastures” overseas. To them their children’s education at Gonubie Primary School was a necessary evil until they received word that they could relocate. As such they displayed no intention whatsoever to engage in this issue or any other school matter.

RESPONSES OF XHOSA PARENTS IN FAVOUR OF AFRIKAANS

“...my child is Xhosa speaking and for me it is more important to know about the other languages which are English and Afrikaans. It will help make it easier for him in high school”

“I am happy that they are learning White languages. It is our duty, the parents' duty to learn them our language at home. We can learn our kids about our language; tell them about the history, about the grandparents.”

“My child will gain more from learning Afrikaans than he will ever get from knowing his own people’s language – it’s a fact! My daughter passed Matric with Xhosa and can’t do anything she’s sitting at home!”

As much as some parents felt this way there were others who did not understand why an issue was being made of having Xhosa at the school. Indeed when the parents weighed up the advantages of the school [well-trained teachers, sports facilities, music lessons, and so forth] foregoing their mother tongue as the first additional language seemed a small price to pay for access to good quality education. The parents also understood that it was their duty to ensure that their language (and culture) were taught at home.

This seemed partially motivated by the access that Afrikaans afforded learners. The local high school offers both languages at Matric level but garners more distinctions in Afrikaans than Xhosa. Also there would seem to be a preconceived notion at secondary level that learners who take their mother tongue aren’t as clever, are more inclined to misbehave and do not achieve the exemption they require to get into university or colleges.

RESPONSES OF XHOSA PARENTS IN FAVOUR OF XHOSA

“My husband and I made a conscious decision to move back from Pretoria to the Eastern Cape in 2008 so that our children can learn to speak and be taught in their mother tongue, but now the school is side-lining us.”

“My boy is a stranger to English, now I must confuse him even more by adding another language he has never heard before? And then they wonder why our children fail and call them stupid.”

“How can you live in a place and not speak the language of the people? As a farmer it’s more important to know Xhosa than Afrikaans – I’m Afrikaans! We speak the language at home. She must learn the native’s language and not speak Fanagalo [a mine-based vernacular of mixed African languages].”

For many of the black parents, I interviewed, it felt as though they were confronted with a double edged sword. Although they wanted their children to learn their home language they also wanted them to learn other subjects too at a good school. With this in mind they wanted to send their children to well-resourced schools, where there was a strong culture of teaching and learning and wanted them to benefit in other ways too such as in learning about music, being able to participate in sports, swimming, drama, chess and other activities which their children would not have been exposed to in an Xhosa school [which are historically disadvantaged].

However they also feel strongly that their children should definitely be exposed to Xhosa at school as the language of their community and home in most cases was increasingly English and they felt that they were depriving their children of an important skill and language otherwise. For others the simple fact they were not afforded a voice by the SGB made them feel even more strongly that the language should be offered at the school, even if only out of spite to the white parents.

RESPONSES OF XHOSA PARENTS NEUTRAL REGARDING THE FAL

“It’s a good school; I don’t want to cause any trouble.”

“...my child battles, if I take him to another school they won’t teach him as nicely. Here the teachers are old and white. They know how to teach and if they say it’s best to have Afrikaans, then I choose Afrikaans. At the end of the day they know best.”

A large majority of the black parents interviewed were neutral on the choice of the FAL in the school. To them this seemed an insignificant issue to weigh in on in general. For others it seemed insignificant in relation to the quality of education provided by the teachers. These parents were thankful that their children were in Gonubie Primary School to begin with as it is a high-performing public school. The other options available to them were rural or boarding schools. The former in the opinion of the parents provided substandard education which was not what they wanted for their children and the latter was financially impossible given that all of the participants who fall in this category are single mothers with no financial support from the fathers of their children.

It was significant to note how many of the parents interviewed were of the belief that in order for their children to access quality education they had to concede to the wishes of the teachers. As all of the Foundation Phase teachers in the school are white and Afrikaans speaking, it seemed as though the decision was being made by default and parents being stripped of their right to choose.

EDUCATORS

In this research the predominant educators' attitude towards the languages of the school was that the combination of English and Afrikaans was the most important. A number of other language attitudes were noted. Firstly, the educators' attitude towards the Xhosa and Afrikaans learners' mother tongue and cultures needs to be considered.

RESPONSES OF EDUCATORS IN FAVOUR OF AFRIKAANS AS THE FAL

"Honestly what can I teach children about Xhosa besides beer and beading?"

"I respect any language group and respect their customs but I've been doing this job for close to thirty years, I know what children need and they need a language that is based on book fact. How do you teach when everything is hearsay?"

It is important to note that the educators that fall under this category were female and based in the Foundation Phase. Having worked in the field for almost all of their careers they are considered the “experts” and routinely consulted by the Department of Education on curriculum matters affecting the Phase as well as local branches of the Trade Unions to run workshops for novice teachers. As such the participants were firmly entrenched in their belief that they knew what was best and in this instance the best was Afrikaans as the FAL for the school.

To them the option of Xhosa was without meaning as it offered no academic advantage. The significance of the culture was summed up as being related to beadwork and beer making and quite alarmingly the history of the people referred to as “hearsay”. I have no doubt that considering their strong views and seniority at the school they would have wielded a large amount of power over other teachers and parents in the school.

RESPONSES OF EDUCATORS IN FAVOUR OF XHOSA AS THE FAL

“We discussed that sometime we should have Xhosa as a second language because there are also English-speaking children who are good at Xhosa.”

“I speak Xhosa, for me I think it would be great. Now I can finally teach what I studied for and not LO.”

Educator participants in this category proved in favour of the choice as it would bring some diversity to an otherwise homogenous school. Of interest was the teacher who was most excited about the possibility of introducing the language into the school for the job opportunities it offered her. As a teacher she had been relegated to the Life Orientation Department as she was sent to the school by the Department of Education. As such she could not be refused a post by the school even though the subject she specialises in and has a great passion for was not offered and she could not find a post anywhere else. Thus the decision to introduce Xhosa represented to her an opportunity to revive her original career ambitions.

RESPONSES OF EDUCATORS NEUTRAL REGARDING THE FAL

“I don’t think that we must do it as a second language and a third language. I don’t see anything wrong with having a first language and two second languages.”

“We discussed that sometime we should have Xhosa as a second language because there are also English-speaking children who are good at Xhosa but we must also offer Afrikaans because there are also children who are good at that language.”

In this research the predominant educators’ attitude towards the languages of the school was that the combination of English and Afrikaans was the most important. A number of other language attitudes were noted. Firstly, the educators’ attitude towards the Xhosa and Afrikaans learners’ mother tongue and cultures needs to be considered.

“I am young so I only started teaching once the changes had taken place. I love the diversity.”

“…made no changes as nothing is different.”

Possibly, some educators who began their careers in multilingual/cultural classes are more understanding and better able to cope with the challenges of multilingual/cultural classes. The majority of the educators in the school were educated before the dismantling of apartheid and perhaps never envisaged that they would be teaching multilingual classes. Some educators were more aware of the changes that had taken place and showed respect for the diversity of the learners. The second attitude which emerged concerned teaching second and third languages. These languages are taught as subjects either by the class teacher or a specialist teacher and must meet the requirements of the curriculum for promotion purposes in preparation for high school and Matric. In some cases second and third languages are taught more like foreign languages separate from the school day:

In this school 60 per cent of the learners are English speaking, 30 per cent Xhosa speaking and 10 per cent are Afrikaans speaking. Many of the English speaking

learners are competent in Afrikaans and/or Xhosa. The learners, like some of their educators, are growing up in a multilingual environment. However, it seems that Xhosa and Afrikaans are being taught only as subjects for curriculum and examination purposes and not for the interpersonal communication skills that could be gained. Many of the educators, in spite of not being able to speak Xhosa, supported the idea that Afrikaans and Xhosa be given equal status as languages in the school, however, one Afrikaans teacher was especially disparaging.

However, the educators themselves were well aware that there could be institutional problems such as with timetabling and staff shortages if the above recommendations of having both languages at the school concurrently were to be implemented. Whether the status of Afrikaans and Xhosa languages will be equalised or not remains to be seen.

4.7 Common themes

Stakeholders believed that it was in the interest of the learners to become multilingual. All English and Afrikaans parents were keen for their children to learn to speak Xhosa and some educators (as noted earlier) suggested that Xhosa and Afrikaans should both be taught as second languages. Xhosa parents believed that it was in their children's interest to learn to speak and become literate in English from the start of school. Learners also expressed a desire to become multilingual and multiliterate and even found situations out of the classroom in which to practice other languages.

While all class educators are Afrikaans/English bilinguals and are thus able to support the Afrikaans-speaking learners, only three educators are able to offer assistance to the Xhosa speaking learners. Ramirez as cited in Laufer (2000:53) noted that learners who would advance the quickest would be those who had had the most opportunities to develop their home language. However, the findings of the research in this school show that there are insufficient opportunities provided for mother-tongue instruction to enable learners to develop their home language.

The Xhosa and Afrikaans speaking parents indicated that they favored English as the medium of instruction and it is understood that all stakeholders are satisfied with the status quo. Some of their parents had enrolled their children at Gonubie Primary School for the specific purpose of acquiring English skills and it seems that the learners are achieving the desired results. Gonubie Primary School could provide the ideal opportunity for learners to become multilingual by utilising the human resources that they have at the school. Generally, the stakeholders in this research do not make sufficient use of this aspect of the language environment. Second and third languages are taught like foreign languages instead of providing opportunities for interaction to take place in a natural way so as to enhance language development.

Only two of the three bilingual educators interviewed indicated that they used languages other than English when chatting informally to learners or parents. There are a number of learners who speak Afrikaans as a first language and all educators speak Afrikaans so it could be expected that Afrikaans would be spoken informally at break time and before and after school. However, this is not the case. A reason for this could be that since Gonubie Primary School became an 'English school' only English is spoken at the school. If educators were as fluent in Xhosa as they are in Afrikaans then the implementation of a multilingual school as proposed by Heugh (1995b:85) could become a reality. However, this would necessitate a change of the stakeholders' mindset of an 'English school' becoming a 'living school'. Versfeld (1995:27) refers to a living school as one that does not merely assimilate its stakeholders into its culture, language and traditions but rather encourages all languages, cultures and traditions in both the formal and informal curricula.

4.8 Conclusion

In this chapter the events surrounding and leading to the conflict and resolution of the introduction of Xhosa as an additional first language in Gonubie Primary School have been interpreted and discussed in the light of their relevance to the development of a school language policy that meets the needs of Foundation Phase learners. Attention was paid to the practices and attitudes of all three stakeholders. However, one needs to be reminded that this school, a former Model C school, forms a very small percentage of the many primary schools in the Eastern Cape and in South Africa.

CHAPTER 5
A THEORETICAL INTERPRETATION OF THE CASE STUDY CONFLICT

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter the data collected is analysed and the results discussed with reference to the theoretical framework as provided by Oakes et al [1998]. Included in the discussion are the results of other school level politics and equity research and how these are supported or contradicted by the data from the aforementioned researchers.

The first section of this chapter presents the core concepts as defined by Oakes et al in their study of norms and politics in achieving equity-minded change. Thereafter one will present the findings of the case as presented in Gonubie Primary School, followed by a discussion of the language attitudes of the two groups of stakeholders, namely, the parents and educators. These attitudes have been found to be complex and diverse with much variation between groups and individuals within groups. Thereafter an analysis is provided of the data collected through the use of the conceptual framework.

As stated formerly, the school is located in the central region of the Eastern Province and is a former “whites only” government school. The majority of learners are well provided for but there are some learners from poorer homes and a few who live in a nearby squatter camp. The school in which the current research took place is well resourced with qualified educators, resource materials, and superior facilities in terms of a computer lab, media center as well as impeccably maintained sports amenities and much support from the local community.

5.2 Theory on the Zone of Mediation

Oakes (2005) suggests that there are three dimensions that impact on school change namely: the political, technical, and normative. Oakes (1998) defines the political perspective as including power relationships between stakeholders, both within and external to schools. Bearing in mind that schools mirror the tensions and hierarchies

of the greater community, educators, parents, and community members engage in political actions so as to secure advantages for themselves and their children (Oakes, 1998). This reallocation of material, staff and educational programmes is of prime importance and the redistribution from those who 'have' to those who 'have less' is often tense.

Technical changes in education, involve revisions to the curriculum, pedagogy, assessment and the manner in which the school is organized (Oakes, 1998). Technical concerns would therefore involve the manner in which schools are organized and how teaching occurs (Oakes, 1998). Examples of technical changes may include the addition of a standardised test or the adoption of new textbooks. These changes, whilst critical, are just one part of the transformation process.

Lastly, Oakes' (1998) notion of the normative perspective assists in understanding the values and beliefs that form the basis of policymaking and implementation. While often unspoken, these attitudes and ideologies can be a source of potential conflict for reformers who are concerned with equity (Oakes, 1998). Normative beliefs include perceptions about ability, how difference is treated, and who is considered educable as well as who is not (Oakes, 1998). These beliefs form the foundation for later reform initiatives.

Additionally, Oakes provides the useful construct of third order changes (1998). While change is a constant in schools, it tends to be focused on policies, procedures and programs. Third order changes are defined as "fundamental changes which seek to reform core normative beliefs about race, class, intelligence and educability held by educators and others involved with our schools" (Oakes, 1998). Third order changes pose significant challenges for equity-minded reformers; they require reconceptualising beliefs about race, merit and fairness. Oakes (1998), however, cautions that not all change is equal. Equity-minded change – change that seeks to achieve equality of opportunity for all students – is particularly risky because it pushes the boundaries of traditionally held views.

Other concepts that are vital to the proper study of this topic are those of the 'zone of mediation and tolerance' (Oakes et al, 1998: p 288). The theory underpinning such

concepts is that educational systems channel cultural and political forces at the local, regional, national and global levels via organizational “sites” (in this case, schools) that mediate (i.e. shape, structure, and constrain) the interactions between individuals within the site (Oakes et al,1998:288). As “Zones of Mediation,” South African schools have also shouldered much responsibility for enacting social change post-Apartheid.

Oakes et al (1998) argue that the cultural and political forces operating both within and on schools serve to undermine the stability and success of policies that challenge unjust educational practices. An individual’s or group’s tolerance of and behaviors toward equity therefore depend on their social location. In other words, the “boundaries of the mediation zone” differ by individual, racial group, social class, and other identities, which pose a considerable challenge to any stakeholder aiming to address either ideological differences or cultural resistance to equity-minded policies (Oakes et al, 1998:289).

While Oakes and her colleagues (1998) have written specifically about the political, economic, and social forces that challenge the equity-minded policy of de-tracking, in this research proposal one applies her “Zone of Normative and Political Mediation” concept to the practices within desegregated and mixed race schools in South Africa, which, in principle, are perceived to be channels of equity but are struggling with the issue of which language should be adopted.

In order to better understand the dynamics at play in the case of Gonubie Primary School it is important to note that schools serve as “Mediating Institutions” who are situated within “ones” of normative and political mediation that embody larger cultural patterns in the form of a “Zone of Tolerance”, a “Zone of Mediation” and a “Margin of Tolerance”, one can better understand that equity-minded reforms differ from other change efforts in profound ways. In order to do so one will begin by providing and contextualising those concepts in terms of the current research scope.

Mediating institutions

These may be defined as organised social settings such as that which is encountered in a school. In this site one has the interaction of the broader macro political and economic forces of a country being channeled into individual sites such as the single schools It is in the context of these mediating institutions that larger social forces impact the lives of individuals [Lampere 1992 in Oakes, 2005: p.958] as global forces impact national policy which in turn impacts local/provincial policy and ultimately the individual citizen. Schools as zones of mediation find themselves in a precarious position wherein larger cultural norms, values and power relations are interacting with supporting and opposing cultural forces. The constant push and pull, conflict and resolution pattern is a result of the existence of the zone and margins of tolerance as explained below [Oakes, 2005: p.960].

The Zone of Tolerance

The “Zone of Tolerance” is the area within which a local community will allow policy to be changed and developed [Oakes, 2005: p.959]. It represents the maximum levels to which a community will allow for change to occur before actively resisting and enforcing the status quo [Oakes, 2005: p.959]. In most instances it accounts for the minor external changes that are identified when a new demographic is introduced.

What is a “Margin of Tolerance?

Charters [1953 in Oakes, 2005: p.959] described the “Margin of Tolerance” as the boundaries composed of the values and traditions which are considered sacred to a particular community within in which the members of a community expect an institution operating within its confines to adhere to. Boundaries to the “Zone of Mediation” are shaped by forces outside of the site such societal and global forces in addition to forces from the community itself. Thus each and every site in all contexts is unique in terms of the political and apolitical forces at play at a local, regional and national level. Despite this as stated by Boyd [1976 in Oakes, 2005: p.958] clever use of public relations and key external stakeholders can be used to sway general opinion of the community in favour of change.

The "Zone of Mediation"

Otherwise known as policy latitude is defined as the space which is shaped by the influence of local and societal forces on a particular site [Oakes, 2005: p.958]. In other words it is the space for transformation that occurs outside of the "Zone of Tolerance". As implied by the term mediation it is the action of negotiation between various stakeholders to achieve a new balance which satisfies all parties. The level of a community's indifference is vital to determining how much transformation will occur and the level of significance it will have [Oakes, 2005: p.958].

That being said, negotiation within this zone is not without its challenges. Change can be heatedly contested especially in certain contexts. One of these contexts is the school as schools are powerful generators, justifiers and transmitters of racialised, gendered and classed thoughts, actions and identities. Therefore the challenge is to shift the 'roles, rules, social character and functioning of schools' (Nkomo, Chisholm & McKinney, 2004:3) and stimulate new ways of being, thinking and practising that are in keeping with ideals of equity and justice.

Forces that shape the "Zone of Mediation".

According to Cuban [1992 in Oakes, 2005: p.960] any reforms to policy are shaped and influenced by power, control, bargaining, alignment and the compromise of various stakeholders operating outside a decentralized system of governing schools. Added to this are external factors such as social movements, legislative and judicial decisions and other influential groups such as professional bodies, trade unions and accreditation organizations. Within the school the learners and their parents, educators and district and other educational officials contribute to educational change.

All if not most of the participants both educators and parents felt that the issue was not resolved in the best manner having been taken to the courts for resolution. However, some felt that it needed to go that far even if only to prove that they were passionate about their children's education too. From the perspective of the staff they too feel that some parents are not allowed an equal say in the school as opposed to others. They are reluctant to confirm whether this is as a result of race or social standing in the community. The parents of the majority of the learners who attend

Gonubie Primary School are professional men and women who live in the suburbs surrounding the school and are proud to be associated with this ‘English school’.

They are represented on the SGB and, although little change has taken place in the school to accommodate learners from diverse language backgrounds, the parents have up until this point seemed more than satisfied with the status quo. Garson (1999) suggests that parents such as these are prepared to pay dearly for education in ex Model C schools as they want their children to be taught by white educators. Christie (in Garson 1999:32) believes that “while race is still a primary concern in schools, class will increasingly dictate … parental choices”. These middle class parents are keen to support their children’s education and have high aspirations for their future. It is these aspirations that promote very strong responses to the issue of selecting Xhosa as the First Additional Language of the school.

The main result of this research is that proficiency in English or Afrikaans and Xhosa for parents is more important than proficiency in the mother tongue. Both groups of parents felt that it was sufficient for their children to be ‘taught’ their mother tongue at home. Some parents felt that by choosing Xhosa as opposed to Afrikaans as the First Additional Language at school they are demonstrating a profound commitment to multilingualism. Indeed some English-speaking parents feel very strongly that more time needed to be allocated to the teaching and learning of Xhosa in the initial stages of schooling.

However it must be noted that for various reasons parents in this research were undecided whether Xhosa or Afrikaans should be the First Additional Language of the school. English parents differed in their choice of language. Some were satisfied with the status quo because they felt that there was a greater need for South Africans to speak Afrikaans, others were neutral believing that one language was just as good as the other in terms of fulfilling a FAL role. Finally the parents who felt strongly that Xhosa should be offered at the school or, at the very least, that parents should be involved in the deliberation process regarding this decision.

5.3 The case study School

In a post - Apartheid South Africa, access to education followed much the same path as that of African American students after the desegregation of their schools. Parents and learners alike were very aware, in some elite public schools, that their presence was not appreciated. It was made very clear that they were allowed access and in return complete assimilation was expected.

This can be seen in the manner in which hairstyles were expected to be as “western” as possible with schools actively promoting that parents “relax” [chemically straighten] their daughters hair on a regular basis making it more conducive to European hairstyles such as ponytails, pigtails, and so forth. There was to be no braiding of hair or plaiting as this was “messy” and learners could be disciplined for violating this rule. In addition African cultural practices such as the shaving of hair after a death in the family and wearing of animal skin around the wrist was prohibited as it caused an offensive smell in the summer months.

Strict rules applied to the speaking of African languages in classrooms and on the playground. In one boarding school this was excluded to the point whereby even telephone calls to parents were to be conducted in English regardless of whether it was a language both parent and child could communicate in.

Parents raising children in a new and democratic South Africa were anxious to provide for their children a better education than that which they themselves had been deprived were eager to accept the rules of these schools for the educational advantage offered to their children. A few cultural sacrifices were a small price to pay in return. Thus the introduction of black learners into a world which although deracialised was still very patriarchal, very Afrikaans and very elite.

After twenty of years of democracy a new black elite has developed in South Africa. The early entrants to the desegregated school system grew up to become an educated and affluent sect with a conscious determination not to subject their children to the trauma that they endured [as described above] in order to get a decent education. Parents today are conscious of their rights as democratic citizens

and consumers in the education market and as such are very vocal about what they will and will not accept in terms of school culture and tradition. Not only do they have the funds to place their children in top performing public schools, they can also afford to place their children in private schools. As a result they demand the equity and access to opportunities of their white counterparts with more vigor than their parents did.

Such parents have no qualms about approaching the School Principal or School Governing Body [SGB] as they do not fear being denied a place at the school being well aware of the South African School's Act. In addition, they have far more access to and avenues with which to interact and bargain with educational institutes, such as the Department of Basic Education [DBE], Non-Governmental Organizations [NGO's], the media, social media and finally the legal system of the country.

Thus acquiescent assimilation into the fold is no longer an option; modern black parents are seeking the accommodation of their culture into schools. Being keenly aware that the time spent in a school will be roughly equal to the amount of time spent at home, they are firm in the desire that their children will not lose their cultural identity at the expense of their parents' careers or desire for an even better education.

The topic of language within schools has always been a sensitive issue in South Africa however a choice between Xhosa and Afrikaans revealed a deep racial tension between black and white parents at this Eastern Cape primary school. Mrs. Ayanda Duma and two hundred other parents sued Gonubie Primary School and the Eastern Cape Department of Education for allegedly enforcing Afrikaans and excluding Xhosa as the school's first additional language [hereafter referred to as Event Seven] (The Herald, 8 October 2012). A first additional language is chosen in line with new CAPS document which prescribes that all schools must offer an additional language to learners in Grades 1, 2 and 3 (CAPS, 2012) Learners must pass this language in order to progress to the next grade (CAPS, 2012) [hereafter referred to as Event 1].

Mrs Duma, whose two children currently are learners at Gonubie Primary School, called for the reversal of school governing body (SGB) election results, as she claimed that the board was not voted in properly. She was particularly incensed as the selection of Afrikaans as the first additional language of the school was going to prejudice the majority of the children at the school who were Xhosa speaking. She was particularly concerned when the previous SGB made the announcement, and wrote to school Principal Cyril Prinsloo several times to register her frustrations to no avail (The Sowetan, 10 October 2012) [hereafter referred to as Event Two].

Other parents joined Mrs Duma in protesting against the decision concerning the selection of Afrikaans as the school's First Additional Language and an agreement was taken at a meeting with departmental officials from the head office in Zwelitsha to have both languages as first additional languages at Gonubie Primary School. At this meeting which took place on the 14th of March 2011 it was agreed that SGB elections would be suspended pending the implementation of the language preference agreement at Gonubie Primary School (Imifundo, 22 April 2012) [hereafter referred to as Event Three].

However, the agreement was dishonoured and SGB elections proceeded in spite of the earlier resolution [hereafter referred to as Event Four]. According to information filed at the Equality Court, Mrs Duma claimed that the breach of agreement was the result of the white parents of the school who wanted to resist any chance of change (Imifundo, 22 April 2012). She further alleged they did not want her or any parents of colour on the SGB and as a result the process of electing new members went ahead without the participation or nomination of black parents.

When questioned about the reason for the clandestine election the school principal, Mr. Prinsloo would not comment on the matter and referred all questions to the Eastern Cape Department of Education (Dispatch Online, 27 February 2012). The Principal said he was also not "at liberty" to release contact details of the new SGB members. Mrs. Duma was especially seething after learning that Cindy Schonknecht, a white parent, circulated a letter imploring other white parents not to nominate Duma or other black parents on to the school's governing body (City Press, April 28 2012) [hereafter referred to as Event Five].

The parent in question wrote: “They are not happy that Afrikaans was chosen as a second language instead of Xhosa, and if she and others get on the governing body, this will be the first thing they aim to change . . . Please, ladies, make an effort to speak to everyone as it is really important for both husband(s) and wives to take part on Thursday.” (City Press, April 28 2012). In the letter, Duma was also accused of assaulting a staff member who asked her to stop protesting outside the school [hereafter referred to as Event Six].

From the side of the Department of Education policy affords SGB’s the right to decide on whether they wanted to offer an African language at their schools. However, a new policy was under review with a view to make African languages compulsory at schools (Imifundo, 27 March 2012). It is expected to be introduced next year. Although governing bodies are legally empowered to determine language policy, it should not result in racial discrimination as learners’ choice of language is a qualified right and as a result, the context of a school and its learners must be taken into consideration (Imifundo, 27 March 2012).

5.4 Oakes Theory applied to analyse the case study

Many Xhosa-speaking learners in this school are part of the predominantly English-speaking community and some are ‘the only Xhosa-speaking people in the street’. The parents of these learners are professional men and women who live in the suburbs surrounding the school and are proud to be associated with this ‘English school’.

Despite being a majority these parents are not represented on the SGB and little significant change has taken place in the school to accommodate learners from diverse language backgrounds. That being said it must be noted that change has indeed taken place. The school song now includes verses in other languages, learners were encouraged to wear football shirts every Friday during the build up to the FIFA World Cup held in South Africa in June of 2010, to celebrate Heritage Day the learners can come to school dressed in their traditional clothing, and so forth.

In decades prior to this point, the majority of parents seem more than satisfied with the status quo. Garson (1999) suggests that this was a result of the Xhosa being intent on their children receiving a good quality education in ex Model C schools. Christie (in Garson 1999:32) believes that "while race is still a primary concern in schools, class will increasingly dictate … parental choices". These middle class parents are keen to support their children's education and have high aspirations for their future.

Despite a few derogatory comments with regards to Xhosa referring to it as a non-academic discipline of little use besides the cultural, many of the parents and educators interviewed expressed positive views of the adoption of the language in the school. This according to Professor Jansen [2009] reflects the tendency of South Africans to generally be in favour of living in peace in a post-Apartheid society with a deep seated respect for one another so long as their cultural norms and values are respected in return.

It is most inspiring to see especially as despite the conflict that many of the parents are on friendly terms with one another despite their personal beliefs with regard to this concern. Thus after 1994, the ANC government emphasised in various policy documents the role that education should play in the transformation of South African society. The establishment of a non-racial education dispensation in which all participants play a part and the promotion of multilingualism were some of the issues prioritised by the ANC government as a reaction against the National Party's government's Bantu Education policy (Chick, 1992:275).

Unlike the secondary schools examined by Oakes et al (2000) who crumbled under the possibility of change, Gonubie Primary school seems to have accepted the adoption of Xhosa as another option for the first additional language with some ease. Demonstration that in some instances transformation and equity in the school environment are inevitable for the longevity of the organisation.

Events analysed

With regard to the case of Gonubie Primary School it is vital to note that the framework as provided by Oakes et al gives us a clear strategy by which to examine

the motives and actions of the stakeholders in coming to a resolution of the case by examining the many events involving key stakeholders that took place before the resolution. One begins by examining the community of Gonubie and its inhabitants which leads us into examining the points of view for the case both for and against the adoption of Xhosa as a language offered at school level and finally the manner in which the adoption of the language is evident of the broader transformation goals of the country as outlined in the Constitution [1994].

For example, if we apply Oakes et al's theory [2005] to the case we can determine the following how the zones of mediation involved in transformation are dependent on the perceptions/perspectives of different persons involved in the case [Oakes, 2005: p.964]. Seven separate but interdependent events [as identified previously] took place amongst the participants from the beginning of the 2011 academic year to the summary judgment in the Equality Court in 2012 (The Herald, 8 October 2012).

Each of these involved the stakeholders and motives which resulted in them behaving in a particular way to ensure that change either was or was not affected.

Event One

Event One took place in the school itself and involved the Principal, SGB, Foundation Phase educators and parents of learners in this phase. Contrary to being a meeting to 'discuss' the effect of new CAPS curriculum on the learners in the year it became a meeting where the majority parents were effectively 'told' about proceedings for the year. The meeting was spent with addresses by the Principal, SGB Chairman and Head of Department for the Foundation Phase, little to no time was allocated for questions and questions were only taken from the white parents attending.

When a black parent did manage to ask how the decision was reached to adopt Afrikaans as the FAL of the school, his question was side-lined by an announcement that the meeting had run over its time but that the SGB would address his concern in a letter to be issued later. When exactly 'later' would be was never cited and neither was a points person who would be tasked with resolving this issue.

The significance of this event is that it proved to confirm the seat of power and authority in the school and that it rested with the minority and not the majority. A small “Margin of Tolerance” (Oakes, 2005: p.959) was identified in terms of the fact that the Principal acknowledged that the School could adopt Xhosa as a FAL in the future but whether this was a sincere statement or just a means to avoid an argument at that time is unknown.

Event Two

Event Two took place thereafter and involved a concerned Mrs. Duma addressed the hegemony of the SGB and the manner in which elections to vote in a new board were conducted. This took place in numerous attempts to speak to the Principal face to face and ultimately written correspondence between the two parties. The correspondence from the School involves various platitudes and promises that elections were to be “open to all parents, transparent and fair” (Personal email, February 11, 2011).

However, in three of her letters asking for further information as to where forms to recommend parents can be found and the deadline for submission of the said forms were met with either no response or an ambiguous answer in terms of “…from the Office” and “…returned to the Office” (Personal email, February 11, 2011). Whose office and when is never specified despite being requested repeatedly. When Parents approached the Front Office, ladies working there rudely asked black parents to “get their facts straight” before coming to ask for forms of which they had no knowledge.

An analysis of this event and that which followed thereafter shows that the “Zone of Mediation” (Oakes, 2005: p.959) regarding any significant change in the school was possessively guarded. A seat on the SGB by a black parent would represent a problem as they would seek to understand why certain decisions were being taken and according to a statement overhead by Mrs. Duma by another white parent “….blacks take so long to come to any decision as they feel the need to consult until everyone is happy” [as related in the interview].

The space in which this event took place was biased in favour of the Principal. His office is situated behind a locked gate and access to him is closely monitored by the secretary in the front office and his personal assistant. Certain parents can see him without appointments or reach him with ease electronically. Other parents can wait for days for responses, despite often taking off time from work to come and see him at the school. Avoidance is a tool of choice in terms of how the school chooses to deal with unpleasant situations.

Event Three

Having reached the limits of her patience with the inaction of the Principal, Mrs Duma took her complaints to the Department of Basic Education in Zwelitsha. In attempting to level the playing field, she and other parents sought another "Mediating Force" (Oakes, 2005: p.959) in the form of the Education Department and its officials who perhaps having nothing to gain would be more objective in examining the situation.

The meeting was arranged by the Department of Basic Education with the SGB and parents for 14 March 2011 (Imifundo, 22 April 2012). To suspend SGB elections, as access to running in these was in contravention of the regulations as stated by the policy, until the implementation of the language policy was complete, however, took place back within the confines of the school.(this sentence is not clear –JH) The stakeholders in this event were the Principal, the full SGB, staff body consisting of Heads of Department representing the school and Mrs Duma, three of her supporting black parents and two Department of Basic Education officials (Imifundo, 22 April 2012).

On examining the numbers alone it is evident that despite having looked to an external source for support Mrs Duma and the other parents were still considerably outnumbered in any decision involving any change whatsoever in the school. The involvement of another mediating institution in the Department of Basic Education proved to do little to shift the balance of power from the grip of the minority. The elections to be held the next day would prove that regardless of the promises made to the visiting officials that it would be postponed which became the Fourth Event where a struggle between the two parties ensued.

Event Four

At the SGB election the next day the current SGB and its future candidates supported by the election official [of their choosing] any and all attempts to address the validity of the elections was negated. Heckling ensued between black and white parents which the election officer blamed on the presence of Mrs Duma. In retaliation for Mrs Duma having sought an external form of support the previous day, the SGB responded by getting their own back.

A man recognised as a pillar of the community and a widely respected former teacher and minister attended the meeting. His presence in addition to that of the Principal, who remained silent despite knowing that indeed the promise of the previous day was being violated, served to bolster support for the SGB and participating white parents. The elections proceeded as planned despite a concerted effort on the part of the opposing parents to delay it.

In examining this event, it would be evident that the “Zone of Mediation” (Oakes, 2005: p.958) would prove to be very small with little to no room for any negotiation. The heckling between the parents in the room would also prove that the “Zone of Tolerance” (Oakes, 2005: p.959) had also been extended far beyond its limits, especially as many of them work closely together in their professional lives and apart from this conflict would have had no reason to be confrontational in their personal lives. This may be seen in the event that would occur next.

Event Five

It later came to the attention of a black parent that Cindy Schonknecht, a white parent, had circulated a letter imploring mothers not to nominate Mrs. Duma or other black parents on to the school’s governing body (City Press, April 28 2012). In the letter she implored for votes as “if *they* are elected the standards of the school will drop”.

The blatant attempt to garner support from parents who were not fully informed of the context of the struggle and had since chosen to not engage in the matter proved infuriating. In addition to the untruth that Mrs. Duma was “a violent woman” (City Press, April 28 2012) and accused of assaulting a staff member who asked her to stop protesting outside the school. This incident labeled as Event Six, in actual fact

took place on the school playgrounds and involved a white male teacher harassing and verbally abusing Mrs. Duma, the assault in question referring to the manner in which she pushed his finger out of her face as he was raging at her in front of her youngest child and was upsetting both mother and child [related during the interview]. The elevated nature of Events Five and Six would prove that as the conflict ensued, the desire to retain control and power of the school intensified. White parents and staff felt pushed to the brink of their patience and took drastic action. This action 'upped the ante' in terms of making the otherwise school-based disagreement a personal one. Mrs. Duma and others report feeling uncomfortable in local shops and venues, hearing whispers in Afrikaans [presumably about themselves] and being ignored by parents of both races who before would have happily engaged when dropping off or fetching their children [related during the interviews by three different parents].

This was in part due to the fact that Mrs. Duma had succeeded in gaining the attention of the media since filing a suit with the Equality Court for the resolution of this crisis after the SGB elections took place. It was felt that she was falsely portraying herself as an underdog to gather sympathy for her cause and destroying the reputation of an otherwise honorable school.

At this point it is important to understand that the actions of Mrs. Schonknecht and the teacher represent in their essence the natural tendency of people to resist change. This instinct to conserve the status quo needed to be understood and worked with as resistance, anger, fear and confusion are inevitable.

Event Six

The resolution ultimately came from the judgment of the Equality Court who after listening to the arguments put forward by both parties decided that the actions of the former SGB in deciding the language policy without consultation were "unconscionable and unjust" (The Herald, 8 October 2012) and ordered that Xhosa be allowed as FAL choice in conjunction with Afrikaans. The Judge admonished all stakeholders for the childish manner in which they had behaved and implored the Principal to act in the best interests of the children and not their parents.

This was a fair judgment given that both parties are satisfied. For the white parents the school will essentially still remain the same, their children will in no way be compelled to learn a language they are unfamiliar with and there needs to be no unpleasant conflict between the parents of both parties concerned.

For the black parents it represents a validation not only of their language but as their rights as parents in the school too. This small victory also represents a permanent shifting of the prevailing status quo in their favor and will assist them in future endeavors. This shift was, however, hard won and necessitated the use of pressure from external forces [namely the media and legislature] in terms of influencing people to achieve certain goals.

Macro policy

The conceptual framework assists us with identifying the manner in which the global political economy influences reform at schools by reinforcing the theory that the boundaries of mediating zones are not only set by forces outside the school. They are largely created by people interacting with one another inside and outside of the school.

In other words when individuals seek to achieve equality in both opportunities and achievement across diverse groups they face immense challenges and resistance. This is largely due to the fact that even within the educational sector resources are seen across the board in economic terms as being scarce in nature and secondly how resources are made available and to whom reflects an understanding of the meaning of culture in society.

Thus by applying Oakes et al's theory [2005] to the case we can determine the following; the mediating institution in this regard would be the school community of Gonubie Primary, reflecting a microcosm of South African society. In this case study we have a clear representation of the broader struggles for equity and redress in South Africa as a whole as represented by the stakeholders involved.

An affluent white, middle class, educated populace represents for the most part the general demographic of white South Africans. Whereas the other party in this case

would be the emerging black elite, representing the new increasingly wealthy populace who are products of the former Model C school structures that they now seek to change for their children.

Another level of analysis would involve the gender conflict at play. As mentioned previously we have the white, middle class demographic as represented by the Principal, Mr. Cyril Prinsloo and his SGB President. The aforementioned representing as mentioned previously the “old guard” in other words the formerly advantaged, masters of the universe under Apartheid, white men who had all the power in terms of access to the resources of the country for themselves and their children.

The latter represented by Mrs. Ayanda Duma, are the “new guard”, individuals who would have formerly been ignored as a result firstly of their race and secondly, in Mrs. Duma’s case, her gender and received whatever treatment the “old guard” would have decided to mete out. Most probably it would have been that of being ignored or silenced completely by threats of losing their jobs, homes, and so forth. However as a result of the democratic change in the country Mrs. Duma and the group she represents is now granted a large amount of access not only to schools but to support in terms of both media and the judiciary to effect considerable change in the school.

At a deeper level still, both representatives can be seen to symbolize the colonizer and the colonized in the form of the languages and cultures they represent. The Principal and the SGB symbolize the part of the Anglo/Afrikaans stakeholder who historically staked a claim over the area and South Africa as a whole and its indigenous people while Duma and her fellow parents and supporters represent the Xhosa people who were effectively controlled by the former.

The “Zone of Mediation” in this context (Oakes, 2005: p.959) is a local site in the community of Gonubie with the key issue as it presents itself being a First Additional Language Policy but below the surface issues of localized politics and equity, representing both literally and figuratively a clash of ages, genders and cultures. Initially the “Zone of Mediation” (Oakes, 2005: p.959) for negotiating with black

parents was quite a small “space” in terms of there being absolute resistance to the introduction of Xhosa in the school as a First Additional Language.

This is exhibited by the selection of Afrikaans without the consultation of the larger parent population in the Foundation Phase. The assumption being that all parents would simply agree with the decision when they found out it had already been made. When faced with opposition the immediate reaction of the dominant party was to close ranks using the power of the SGB to justify the decision thus resulting in the ensuing struggle.

The struggle representing the historic desire for the former advantaged stakeholder to retain some of their former control and the latter to achieve some form of balance between the “haves” and the “have nots”. A key point is that it required the input of the independent media and judiciary to step in so as to achieve this. This happened despite the power of the dominant group and their former efforts to silence the other using the structures and mediums of the educational sector in the form of SGB policy, practices and meetings.

The main reason for this success being the changing norms and values of South African society and the latitude of the “Zone of Mediation” (Oakes, 2005: p.959) to allow for such. As ultimately it is the cultural forces at play that promote stability or change and in the instance of this case the overwhelming support and evidence of clear inequality of the part of the leadership of the school tipped the scales in favor for Mrs. Duma and her constituents.

The former English and Afrikaans community represented the former cultural stability of the old political system, and as such set the traditions of the school and the parameters of change which would be tolerated. The aforementioned parameters are that of outsiders [non-English and -Afrikaans speakers] attempting to be assimilated in the dominant culture in exchange for acceptance into the high= functioning school.

The issue of the selection of the first additional language was not the key concept but rather what it represented in terms of access to education in terms of the redistributive policies that have been implemented in South Africa since 1994. In the

broader economic sense it can be seen in terms of mechanisms such as Broad Based Black Economic Empowerment (BBBEE) and Affirmative Action (AA) Acts of 2003 respectively and in an educational context the right to education for each child regardless of their race and economic background.

Thus it can be determined that as a result of global influences macro policy in South Africa changed, this in turn affected the site as reflected in the form of the school and its policy and ultimately the individual in the form of the parents and their children as posited by Boyd (Oakes, 2005: p.965). That being said, educational gatekeepers at in the case study school originally used by Oakes et al set the limits of the extent to which they would allow the values, sensibilities, practices, or cultural and material realities of other social groups or entities to permeate the organizational boundary, the school culture, and the leadership's understanding of its educational context. So much so that when confronted with change as an inevitable occurrence, the stakeholders chose to close the school rather than accept the transformation.

Without an "active and forthright confrontation" of parents' and teachers' belief systems, equity minded policies have little chance to move beyond a symbolic form of integration, nonetheless (Oakes et al., 2005:301). Macro level policies do not mollify this threat because they do not attempt to actively dissolve distrust across social boundaries nor do they address these dynamics that schools have to mediate." As such, the implications from this small scale schools' research is that unless educational and socio political equity are understood to offer mutual benefits and accordingly foster and constitute new social and cultural habits, then the noble and abstract ideals wielded by broad public discourse on integration will continue to avoid materialization in micro level school interactions.

5.5 Aftermath

The vision that the ANC had in 1955, namely, that "the doors of learning shall be opened to all", is embodied in the 1995 White Paper for Education and Training and the 1996 Schools Act. However, as a result of the new FAL requirement, Gonubie Primary School along with other schools correctly assumed that they were obliged to make a choice as to which two languages was required in the Foundation Phase and

opted to drop their non-Afrikaans African languages and select Afrikaans as the First Additional Language.

The choice of Afrikaans as the FAL was, generally, based on a range of practical considerations. Firstly, these schools had Foundation Phase educators that have been trained to teach Afrikaans as a second language. The African language was often taught by a specialist SGB paid teacher which was seen an unnecessary expense considering the ever-increasing demands on the SGB budget.

Secondly, the adoption of an African language as a FAL – with its additional two to three hours of weekly instruction - would have staffing consequences and increase overall school expenditures in terms of providing resources for African-language teaching unlike Afrikaans. Thirdly, many parents expressed anxiety regarding the extremely high demands, and disadvantage, which Xhosa and other African language matriculation examinations would place upon their children.

By contrast, Afrikaans was widely viewed as an ‘easy’ language that offered the opportunity for excellent Matric results. Given the advantages of English and Afrikaans, the SGB's of many schools, like Gonubie Primary School, chose Afrikaans as the FAL and dropped African language instruction.

In his ruling on the case Deputy Chief Justice Moseneke recognises the possibility of a second lost generation of learners as a result of a misunderstanding amongst parents about the language instruction that will serve their children best. In reading ‘the market’, parents of learners have concluded that the success of their child relies on the mastery of English from the very entry of learners into school. The Deputy Chief Justice is clearly concerned that the majority of young South Africans might, because of new form of power lose touch with who they are and the communities they come from.

Diminished African-language instruction, in a growing cohort of schools, is a direct function of the absence of adequate teaching materials, qualified educators, additional expenses, difficult Matric exams and the tradition of English and Afrikaans as dominant languages of instruction. Although education played an important

symbolic role in the dismantling of Apartheid, education laws and statements will be nothing more than fine-sounding political rhetoric until such time as the universal aim of 'education for all' has become a practical reality in South Africa. Prevailing political, economic, social, and health realities predict an uphill battle for the establishment of a universal basic education for all South African children.

In South Africa, policies and structures are in place to be able to exert pressure on schools to effect meaningful change for equity and redress. However, the power historically ascribed to the school management and governing bodies of ex Model-C schools has also allowed schools to retain their status quo and avoid committing to real transformation.

Thus the draft a White Paper which if passed, will effectively compel former Model C schools, such as Gonubie Primary School, to accept other indigenous language into their curriculums as long as there is a demand for the language and it is feasible [financially and otherwise] to do so. The motive for such a law being that according to Education MEC Mandla Makupula, senior officials in the Education Department feared to intervening in language policy matters at former Model C schools (Imifundo, 26 August 2012) as they had no right to do so according to the current state of the law. With such a bill being passed, however, Model C schools that resist compliance could be prosecuted. This is a pertinent move in direct opposition to the authority of SGB's as entailed in the SASA sections 6(2) and 6(3).

5.6 Conclusion

In this chapter the research results have been interpreted and discussed in the light of their relevance to a school language policy that meets the needs of all Foundation Phase learners. Attention was paid to the practices and attitudes of all stakeholders and the significance of their actions in the spaces wherein they interacted.

CHAPTER 6
CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Introduction

This chapter summarizes the primary findings of this research and presents conclusions about the case study of Gonubie Primary School. It also provides answers to the research question regarding the features and patterns of school level politics and the struggle for some semblance of equal recognition of language, culture and power.

Gonubie Primary School presents as an inclusive institution which rejects any form of discrimination. The school has made considerable progress in accommodating learners from diverse backgrounds and providing access to learners from previously disadvantaged groups. The academic and sporting achievements of learners of different race, class and gender bear testimony to this. However, despite these overt displays of acceptance at its core the School, in essence is only willing to accommodate parents and learners in as far as these individuals are willing to assimilate into the prevailing school culture as represented in its traditions, code of conduct and ultimately its language policy.

This does not mean to suggest that opposing parents, teachers and management of the school are intentionally racist. On the contrary, most of them desire equality and justice for all. However, the deeply entrenched and institutionalized practices as well as the enduring discourses of Apartheid continued to infiltrate meaning-making in this post-Apartheid school. Cultural stereotypes perpetuate a notion that Xhosa is a language of “beadwork and beer making” and having no real value whether academic or social for learners.

Resistance to this opinion was forcefully blocked by the management of the school and assisted by the historically determined hierarchical structures in the school and the dominance of white males in authoritative positions who worked against attempts to shift the balance of power within the school so as to include Xhosa as a valid curriculum option. This shift did occur but was a result of extreme difficulty on the part

of a small group of parents led by Ayanda Duma by mobilizing and making use of the limited amenities available to them in terms of the media and legislature.

6.2 Aim and Objectives

This study set out to gain an understanding of the conflict and zones of mediation with regard to the attitudes of various stakeholders in Gonubie Primary School. This was done by examining the conflict as represented in the media, the personal observations of parents and educators and the resolution as given by the Equality Court of South Africa and its impact on the school at present. The chapter closes with ideas for future research.

The school in which the current research took place is fully functional with well-qualified educators, an abundance of resource materials, superior facilities and learners from supportive homes. Both the staff and parents of the school would consider themselves to be progressive and visionary in their approach to education and school governance.

However, the decision of which language to include as the First Additional Language of the school served as the final straw for the majority of black parents who found that their voices were not being heard or considered within the school environment. Despite a large constituency of Xhosa-speaking learners the traditional first additional language of Afrikaans was being enforced with little or no serious consideration of any African language as an option. What followed as a result of this was a most impressive campaign on the side of the school and its SGB to maintain the status quo of having Afrikaans as the first Additional Language and the Xhosa- speaking parents who mobilized themselves and external stakeholders in the form of NGOs, the local media as well as the legislature, to compel the school to listen to them and not to ignore Xhosa as a viable option in addition to Afrikaans.

This brought to the fore an understanding of the lack of awareness of a number of important issues contained in the CAPS document. Among them were issues such as multilingualism, respect for all languages and cultures and the recognition of the fluid relationship between language, culture and school governance.

The compromise reached by the school to allow both languages demonstrates two key themes, that of transformation and that of reconciliation. The former as a result of a traditionally Afrikaans based school accommodating Xhosa in its curriculum and the latter in the form of the many parents, educators and community members who expressed a desire for the learners to gain an understanding of an African indigenous language so as to better orient them to life in the modern post-Apartheid context.

From the research, one realizes that when deciding on and implementing change of any kind in a school numerous factors need to be considered. Langhan (1996) suggests that one adopts a contextual approach when adopting a new process to the school environment particularly in the form of language wherein one analyses the critical conditions which will ensure success for a particular school. When amending a school language policy, it is often assumed that the identified problems will be solved and that all the envisaged goals will be met. However, it should be remembered that policies only create the necessary conditions for the change to take place. In this instance the need to select a First Additional Language served to set the boundaries in which change could take place but it was essentially dependent on the co-operation between all stakeholders, parents, educators and staff.

6.3 Theoretical and Legal Framework

Whether reforms are embraced or rebuffed rests upon the will and perceived needs of a wide array of school, district and community stakeholders. One can organise these competing factors in terms of three conceptual components. Oakes (2005) suggests that there are three dimensions the political, technical, and normative which impact on school change.

Oakes (2005) conceives of the political perspective to include the power relationships between stakeholders, both within schools and from external constituencies. Schools mirror the tensions and hierarchies of the greater community. Educators, parents, principals and community members engage in political posturing in order to secure advantages for themselves and their children. This reallocation of material, staffing and programs should not be seen as a one dimensional movement of “things” rearranged without consequence. Instead, it is important to acknowledge that these

resources are desirable – be they educators, materials, or services – and that redistribution from those who 'have' to those who 'have less' is often tense.

Thus changes in education, involve revisions to the curriculum, pedagogy, assessment and school organization (Oakes, 2005). Oakes (1998) cautions that not all change is equal. Equity-minded change – change that seeks to achieve equality of opportunity for all students – is particularly risky because it pushes the boundaries of traditionally held views.

The task of redefining schools as resources for the social and economic advancement of minority groups is a key aspect of the social change that is also underway in post-Apartheid South Africa to remedy the subordinate status of blacks and other non-white racial/ethnic groups. It was long considered a sociological outlier in issues pertaining to racial inequality because of apartheid's rigid grip (Seidman, 1999), South Africa aims to produce schools where learners of all races may peaceably co-exist, share educational resources, and invest their human capital in the development of a democratic nation.

To understand how the ideological context and tone set by school leadership can undermine the goals of an equity-minded practice such as integration, one argues that it is necessary to know what occurs on the "ground" in schools at both the micro- and organizational-levels. On the one hand, schools can be "opened" to historically marginalized groups in terms of access to their academic resources (e.g., teacher quality, computers, books, rigorous curriculum and so forth). On the other hand, school officials may reinforce the strength and rigidity of racial boundaries through daily social and cultural codes and practices. Findings show that the actors most empowered to be "change agents," driven by competition and the perceived potential of lost resources, local contextual norms, and who often belong to dominant racial groups, are often situated within and maintain organizational structures that reinforce their status, power, and interests.

The South African Schools Act (SASA) of 1996 saw an integrated educational system as addressing the collective needs of a fledgling democracy. Given that the Apartheid government had used inequitable educational policies to sustain racial

stratification, the SASA (1996) called for a deracialised and unified national system of education, stating: “WHEREAS this country requires a new national system for schools which will redress past injustices in educational provision, … and in so doing lay a strong foundation for the *development of all our people’s talents and capabilities*, advance the democratic transformation of society, combat racism and sexism and all other forms of unfair discrimination and intolerance, *contribute to the eradication of poverty and the economic well-being of society, protect and advance our diverse cultures and languages* …” (SASA, p. 1).

Similarly, South Africa’s 1997 Language in Education Policy relied on this notion that the people of society have an inherent value. The document states, “The new Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, the government, and thus the Department of Education, recognizes that *our cultural diversity is a valuable national asset* and hence is tasked, amongst other things, to promote multilingualism” (Language in Education Policy, 1997). South Africa’s national approach to school integration explicitly aims to use education to unify society as opposed to merely providing equal opportunities to marginalized groups. South African national policies and laws use inclusive language, such as “all learners” and “all our people’s talents and capabilities,” which signaled the government’s recognition that the foundation of a strong democracy is social unification.

Even though South Africa’s desegregation efforts span less than two decades, integration also is far from being achieved. Today the nation continues to face the challenge of achieving school integration and continues to adhere to the belief that policy changes at the macro level will actually achieve integration. But can the nation achieve such noble goals without confronting what political theorist Danielle Allen (2004) refers to as “fossilized distrust” among citizens, who because of the historical social, economic, and political divides may not recognize the common stakes and benefits of citizenship?

6.4 Analysis

On a national level the implementation of the LiEP has been problematic and reasons range from poorly equipped and dysfunctional schools with unqualified

educators to learners from disadvantaged homes. The school in which the current research took place is fully functional with well-qualified educators, an abundance of resource materials, superior facilities and learners from supportive homes. The staff would consider themselves to be progressive and visionary educators.

However, besides naming English as the medium of instruction and Afrikaans as the First Additional Language very little progress has been made in drawing up a School Language Policy. The following are possible reasons for this slow progress. The school has received no guidance from the Eastern Cape Provincial Department of Education and no support or information has been given by way of staff training or workshops. There is clearly a lack of the understanding of the new policy requirements. This has led to a lack of awareness of a number of important issues contained in the CAPS document. Examples of these are the promotion of multilingualism, respect for all languages and cultures and the recognition of the fluid relationship between language and culture.

From the above discussion one realizes that when deciding on and implementing an additional language in a school numerous factors need to be considered. Langhan (1996) suggests that one adopts a contextual approach when choosing and that one analyses the critical conditions which will ensure success for a particular school. When developing a School Language Policy, it is often assumed that the identified problems will be solved and that all the envisaged goals will be met. However, it should be remembered that policies only create the necessary conditions for the change to take place. The School Language Policy sets the boundaries in which the change can take place and may suggest the mechanisms that will bring about the change but it is essentially the co-operation between all stakeholders that finally determines the success or failure of the policy. Policy development is not a linear process but rather a cyclical procedure. Decisions that are made may be reversed and changes made at any time during its development.

At this research took place on a small scale, being a qualitative participatory case study, the knowledge and understanding that has resulted is relevant to the local context and cannot be used to make general claims. However, arising from this research, areas for further research have been identified. Most importantly is the

need for more in-depth studies on the implementation of School Language Policy across a broad range of primary schools in South Africa. This information could be used to benefit schools, training institutions and departments of education. Following this are suggested areas of research that could be useful to future language planners and policy makers.

6.5 Theory used to analyses the case study

Oakes (2005) framework as developed in her study of how schools structure inequality through tracking (2005) forms the lens through which this research will examine the case. Her hypothesis is that reforms are embraced or rebuffed based on the will and perceived needs of a wide array of school, district and community stakeholders (Oakes, 2005).

Oakes (2005) suggests that there are three dimensions that impact on school change namely: the political, technical, and normative. Oakes (1998) defines the political perspective as including power relationships between stakeholders, both within and external to schools. Bearing in mind that schools mirror the tensions and hierarchies of the greater community, educators, parents, and community members engage in political actions so as to secure advantages for themselves and their children (Oakes, 1998). This reallocation of material, staff and educational programmes is of prime importance and the redistribution from those who ‘have’ to those who ‘have less’ is often tense.

Lastly, Oakes’ (1998) notion of the normative perspective assists in understanding the values and beliefs that form the basis of policymaking and implementation. While often unspoken, these attitudes and ideologies can be a source of potential conflict for reformers who are concerned with equity (Oakes, 1998). Normative beliefs include perceptions about ability, how difference is treated, and who is considered educable as well as who is not (Oakes, 1998). These beliefs form the foundation for later reform initiatives.

Most importantly Oakes’ provides a concept most vital to the proper study of this topic in terms of the ‘zone of mediation and tolerance’ (Oakes et al, 1998: p 288).

The theory underpinning such concepts is that educational systems channel cultural and political forces at the local, regional, national and global levels via organisational "sites" (in this case, schools) that mediate (i.e. shape, structure, and constrain) the interactions between individuals within the site (Oakes et al,1998:288). As "zones of mediation," South African schools have also shouldered much responsibility for enacting social change post-apartheid.

Oakes et al (1998) argue that the cultural and political forces operating both within and on schools serve to undermine the stability and success of policies that challenge unjust educational practices. An individual's or group's tolerance of and behaviors toward equity therefore depend on their social location. In other words, the "boundaries of the mediation zone" differ by individual, racial group, social class, and other identities, which pose a considerable challenge to any stakeholder aiming to address either ideological differences or cultural resistance to equity-minded policies (Oakes et al, 1998:289).

While Oakes and her colleagues (1998) have written specifically about the political, economic, and social forces that challenge the equity-minded policy of de-tracking, in this research proposal one applies her "zone of normative and political mediation" concept to the practices within desegregated and mixed race schools in South Africa, which, in principle, are perceived to be channels of equity but are struggling with the issue of which language should be adopted.

Comparisons of the manner in which multiracial schools in the United States of America negotiate change as compared to South Africa, suggest that policy makers have looked towards education as a solution to social problems without considering how nonstructural factors could undermine their reforms. Economic, racial, social, and cultural phenomena converge and create a complex set of social interactions sustained by explicit organized school practices that are limited in their impact to realize fully the objectives integrationist aims. Just as Meyer and Rowan (1978) articulated years prior, it is the "street level bureaucrats," the principals and teachers in a school, who shape (and are shaped by) the local political, cultural and social climate

In using the framework developed by Oakes, one hopes firstly to show the manner in which normative beliefs are imperative to working towards or against educational change. Secondly, the manner in which normative beliefs and assumptions form the basis through which people relate to one another especially in the context of the school.

6.6 Implications

When engaging in school level politics and zones of mediation, stakeholders need to, and in the instance of this case seemed to, understand that it was the learners' benefit which was to be prioritized above all other motives. However, coming from a history fraught with inequality and discrimination it is hard for some to not see change as a medium of getting rid of the old guard as opposed to transforming and accommodating the new. The healthy resolution of conflict is something that serves an important purpose as there is a need for all people to be able to communicate effectively and to compromise in order to bring about a more equitable solution for all stakeholders. In this instance it was ultimately determined that there was much value in children of all races being given the opportunity to choose whether to learn Afrikaans or Xhosa as well as being able to speak and being literate in English.

Lessons learnt from this case study

- To ensure that there is free and fair representation of all stakeholders in the decision making process in the school environment. Alexander (1992) refers to this way of policy making as "planning from below".

- The stakeholders need to understand from the outset that such decisions require a very lengthy process of debate and deliberation and those decisions should be under constant review and not remain static.

- Stakeholders should be familiar with the Constitution and any pertinent Departmental documents as well as an understanding of the terminology used in the documents.

- It is important that the school has an accurate linguistic profile of all learners and staff.

- Factors to consider are the linguistic strengths of educators and learners, opportunities for language learning that are provided by both the formal and informal school environment and, very importantly, the socio-economic conditions of the school.

6.7 Limitations

The strong reaction from the headmaster reveals the immense power that this level of management possesses to block any changes. Unless there is substantial involvement from the management of the school, significant changes are unlikely to happen. Involvement does not only imply granting permission for research; it implies a deep and committed willingness on the part of management to engage with contentious areas, and preparedness to shift practices despite personal and social investments. It also requires school leaders to innovate ways of valuing and rewarding various forms of cultural capital.

Broad generalizations cannot be made from a single case study. This research provides in-depth understanding of only one school in South Africa and does not in any way attempt to claim that findings from this school can be used to generalize conditions and practices in other schools in South Africa, including other ex-Model-C schools. It does, however, provide powerful examples of how seemingly mundane talk and everyday practices can exclude students and reproduce gender, race and class discrimination in what can be seen as a typical ex Model-C school.

6.8 Future research possibilities

As this research was on a small scale, qualitative participatory case study, the knowledge and understanding that has resulted is relevant to the local context and cannot be used to make general claims. However, arising from this research, areas for further research have been identified.

Most importantly is the need for more in-depth studies on the implementation of School Language Policy across a broad range of primary schools in South Africa. This information could be used to benefit schools, training institutions and departments of education. Following this are suggested areas of research that could be useful to future language planners and policy makers.

An investigation could be done into areas of conflict in school and the manner in which resolution and equity is achieved in a wide variety of schools e.g. primary and secondary, urban and rural, inner city and township schools that are linked to other studies. In these schools the constraints and implementation challenges as well as the success and failures of conflict resolution could be researched.

6.9 Conclusion

One of the goals of schools should be to empower all learners to participate fully in society. As English remains the favored medium of instruction it should added that learners must be taught in such a way that it does not undermine African languages but rather promotes their value for both the learners and the nation. With regard to this research it was necessary for the School Language Policy to be formulated within the framework of educational transformation in order to meet the needs of learners and their parents at a micro level and the reconstruction of society at a macro level. The findings of the study may be useful to other schools and school policy makers and more especially to this school as they endeavor to perfect their school to meet the needs of all stakeholders.

This research suggests that given appropriate opportunities, marginalized parents can become powerful agents of change within schools, but this requires the full support and commitment of internal and external stakeholders. In saying this, further research is needed in order to consider the intricate ethical issues that surround research on school change. Such research needs to take into consideration the unequal power relations that exist in institutionalized spaces and the impact change has on those attempting to disrupt the status quo. More lessons can be learnt in researching schools that are working with multiculturalism in productive ways. There

are indications that these practices are starting to emerge in some schools which in itself is a positive sign.

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