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The Interplay between Teachers and Texts in Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET): A Case Study

Carola Steinberg

The Interplay between Teachers and Texts in Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET): A Case Study

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A research report submitted to the Faculty of Education,
University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg,
in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Education.

Supervisor: Lynne Slonimsky

Johannesburg, 1997

Abstract

This research report explores the implications of one central question: 'In what ways can course materials support and improve ABET teachers' ability in the classroom and what are the limits of that support?' Methodologically it is an ethnographic case study of five teachers at company literacy programmes using *The ELP English Literacy Course for Adults* to prepare learners for examinations at ABET English Communications Levels 1&2. Conceptually it makes use of Shirley Grundy's exposition of different paradigms for thinking about curriculum and Jean Lave's notion of learning in a community of practice. It portrays literacy as a social practice in which people learn to master skills, make decisions about the applications of those skills and develop an emancipatory awareness. The research enables insights into the relationship between ABET teachers and texts, outlining their respective responsibilities and some implications for thinking about ABET teacher development.

Descriptors

Adult Basic Education and Training, Adult Basic Education, Adult Literacy, Adult Education, Teachers and Texts, English Literacy Project, English Literacy, Teacher Development, Curriculum Development, Curriculum in Context

Declaration

I declare that this research report is my own work, written under the supervision of Lynne Slonimsky. It is submitted for the degree of Master of Education in the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any other degree or examination in any other university.

_____

Carola Steinberg

_____ day of _____ , 1997.

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Contents Page

		Page
CHAPTER 1	**Introduction: What is the Interplay between Teachers, Texts and Contexts?**	
1.1	The Questions for this Research Report	1
	- Is the ELP Course a Convivial Tool?	2
	- Do Teachers Use the Innovative Methodology?	3
	- What are the Contextual Influences?	3
1.2	Introducing the English Literacy Project	4
1.3	A Note on Style	5
1.4	A Note on Structure	5
CHAPTER 2	**Rationale: ABET in a Moment of Transition**	
2.1	Introduction	7
2.2	A Definition of Curriculum: Catherine Cornbleth	8
2.3	The Context for the Interplay between ABET Teachers and Texts	9
	- The Pre-1990 Context	9
	- ELP's Curriculum Learning Pre-1990	11
	- ABET Policy in the Making: 1990 - 1995	14
2.4	The Design Logic of *The ELP English Literacy Course for Adults*	16
	- The Curriculum Paradigm	16
	- The Course Content	17
	- The Course Structure	19
	- The Language Teaching Methodology	20
	- The Identity of the Learner	22
	- The Construct of the Teacher	23
	- Concluding Comment	24
2.5	Contextual Influences on the Course Development	25
2.6	In Conclusion	27
CHAPTER 3	**Research Methodology: Illuminating the Interplay**	
3.1	Introduction	28
3.2	The Research Paradigm	28
3.3	The Purpose: Illumination	29
3.4	The Method: Thick Description	31
3.5	The Research Process	33
	- Negotiating Access	34
	- Research Techniques	35
	- The Effect of the Observer	36
	- Ensuring Validity	39
3.6	The Analysis: Learning from Action Research	40
3.7	In Conclusion	43

CHAPTER 4	**Literature Review:**	Page
	Literacy as Social Practice	
4.1	Introduction	44
4.2	A Conception of Curriculum	45
	- The Definition of Literacy: a Debate	45
	- Three Conceptions of Curriculum: Shirley Grundy	46
	- ELP's Experience with the Emancipatory Interest	48
	- Learning in a Community of Practice: A. MacIntyre and Jean Lave	
	- Literacy as Social Practice: Barry Stierer and Janet Maybin	52
	- Literacy Practices: Brian Street	53
	- Literacy Curriculum Development: H.S. Bhola	55
	- ELP's Conception of Curriculum	57
	- Concluding Comment	58
4.3	Teachers and Texts	59
	- Some Research into Teachers and Texts	60
	South Africa: D.P. Langhan	60
	Mozambique: Judith Marshall	62
	USA: Catherine Cornbleth	64
	- Conceptions of Teaching: Daniel Pratt	66
	- Authority and Trust: Michael Polanyi	70
	- Scaffolding and the ZPD: Neil Mercer	71
	- Concluding Comment	74
4.4	Conceptual Tools Developed in this Chapter	75

CHAPTER 5	**Presenting the Findings:**	
	The Interplay Between Teachers, Texts and Contexts	
5.1	Introduction	76
5.2	The Teachers and their Contexts	77
	- Elizabeth Mokgata	77
	- Joseph Kameta	79
	- Selina Legong	80
	- Richard Worthington	81
	- Thomas Mahambani	83
	- Commonalties	85
5.3	Course Materials as a Convivial Tool	86
	- "I can't just teach from nowhere"	87
	Why Teachers Use Course Materials	87
	Why Teachers Use the ELP Course	88
	- "I take what is most important and I concentrate on that"	91
	Teachers' Conception of Knowledge	91
	Adding Their Voices to the Course	94
	Disagreeing with the Course	97
	Misunderstanding the Course	103
	- "One can't have ideal materials"	106
	The Need for Scaffolding	106
	The Power of Correction	109
	- "Rather make users like me more advanced"	111
	The Influence of Prior Training	112
	The Request for In-Service Development	113
	- "The main thing is for learners to enjoy and understand"	114
	- Concluding Comment	115
		Page

5.4	Responses to Innovative Methodology	116
	- The Modular Format	117
	- Task-based Workbooks	120
	- Communicative Techniques	121
	- Learner-controlled Techniques	123
	- Bi-lingual Teaching	125
	- Visual Literacy	127
	- Concluding Comment	128
5.5	Contextual Challenges	129
	- Mixed Level Classes	130
	- The Pressure of Exams	132
	- The Value of Stability and Support	134
5.6	In Conclusion	135

CHAPTER 6	**Reflections and Recommendations: Possibilities for ABET Teacher Development**	
6.1	Introduction	136
6.2	Insights Gained through this Research	137
	- Regarding ABET Course Materials as Convivial Tools	137
	- Regarding the Relationship between ABET Teachers and Texts	142
	- Regarding ABET Teacher Development	146
	- Concluding Comment	148
6.3	Limitations of this Research	149
6.4	Recommendations Arising from this Research	149
	- For Reworking the ELP Course	150
	Repackage in Line with the IEB exams	150
	Write a Teachers' Guide	151
	Make Learner-controlled Activities easier to Manage	151
	Do Not Reconceptualise	152
	- For ABET Teacher Trainers	152
	Need for Ongoing Teacher Development	152
	Need for Training to be Reflective	153
	Look at Teacher -Text Relationship	154
	Attend to Particular Methods	154
	- For Further Research	155

REFERENCES	157

LIST OF APPENDICES	162

CHAPTER 1 Introduction:
What is the Interplay between Teachers, Texts and Contexts?

1.1 The Questions for this Research Report

The motivation for this research arose out of work done in the field of Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET). I had been a member of the team at the *English Literacy Project (ELP)* which wrote, designed and published *The ELP English Literacy Course for Adults* and *The ELP Numeracy Course for Adults*. Now I wanted to see whether and how the completed Courses actually worked in ABET classrooms.

The lens through which I observed the ELP course in action came in the form of a question, which I wanted to answer because of ongoing debates between teacher trainers and materials developers in the ABET field during the years we were writing the Course[1]. It was formulated in the research proposal as follows:

> *In what ways can course materials support and improve ABET (Adult Basic Education and Training[2]) teachers' ability in the classroom and what are the limits of that support?*

I decided to use ELP's course as a case study to explore this question. That would also satisfy my curiosity about how teachers were using the ELP course materials and how the materials were influencing what teachers did in the classroom. To focus the research more specifically, I formulated three sub-questions, which arose out of the intentions that ELP had when we created the Course: Is the ELP course a convivial tool? Do teachers use the innovative methodology embodied in the Course? How does the Course adapt to different contexts?

[1] Referring to *The ELP English Literacy Course for Adults* throughout this research report would be too cumbersome, so I have abbreviated it to 'the ELP course' or the 'Course' with a capital C.

[2] ABET (Adult Basic Education and Training) is the current, official term for this field of education. It has been in use since 1994 and reflects the national vision to integrate education and training. The ELP Course and this research is concerned with the education, not the training component of ABET, so it would be more accurate to describe it as ABE (Adult Basic Education). But my use of the term ABE might be interpreted as a political statement indicating opposition to the integration of education and training, which is an impression I do not want to create.

1.1.1 Is the ELP Course a Convivial Tool?

Elliot Eisner (1985) followed Ivan Illich when he picked up on the term 'convivial tool' and applied it to teaching-learning materials for use in schools. Eisner was concerned about the 'mistake' of aspiring to create teacher proof materials which define and control what a teacher should do. Instead, he suggested, materials should be conceived and designed to be "convivial tools" which, like a telephone,

> expand one's options, can be used without extensive training, do not restrict what messages one can convey, and do not impose time constraints on their use. Convivial curriculum materials .. can provide a structure within which a teacher can operate, but they can still provide options; indeed, they can stimulate ingenuity. .. The ultimate aim of such materials is to minimise the teachers' dependency on them, to offer to the teacher materials that will foster a sense of competence both in pedagogical matters and in the content to which pedagogy is directed (p368).

This resonated with ELP's aspirations to produce materials that would enable teachers to improve their teaching practice and become more creative in their teaching methodology, even if thorough pre-service training were not available. The stated aims of *The ELP English Literacy (and Numeracy) Course for Adults* were to provide teachers with both "a guideline for the content of their teaching .. a secure yet flexible learning programme, and a model for exercises and methodology .. which teachers can extend and adapt." (Deetlefs and Steinberg, 1993, p3)

There are three valuable criteria in Eisner's description of convivial materials. Convivial materials should allow a variety of messages to come through. They should simultaneously provide structure and expand options. They should foster a sense of competence in teachers. This means that, when being used in a classroom, a convivial course would be supportive, generative, user-friendly, adaptable and empowering.

The metaphor of a course as a convivial tool was a useful question for this research in several ways. Firstly, it enabled me to look at teachers' use of the ELP course in a non-judgmental way: the question became how teachers are using the Course, not whether they are using it as the course writers intended. Secondly, it focused my view on the interaction between user and tool and the qualities needed to make that a productive relationship. Thirdly, it maintained my perspective: no matter how much accumulated knowledge about the teaching and learning of ESL (English as a Second Language) and literacy the Course embodies, it remains a tool that people use as they see fit.

1.1.2 Do Teachers use the Innovative Methodology?

This was more of an evaluative question asked from the perspective of the course writers. The course writers intended the Course to "teach the teachers about teaching. It takes into account teachers' traditional expectations as well as introducing them to innovative methods of teaching." (Ibid.) The Course embodies a communicative, learner-centred methodology and uses techniques such as pair-work, projects, learner self-assessment and bilingual teaching.

So the questions I set out to answer were: Do teachers notice these methods when they appear in the instructions in the workbooks? Do they ignore or follow the methods in their teaching? If they ignore the methods, what do they replace them with? If they follow the methods, how? Do they adapt or extend the methods? What do they think about the methods? Is there a discrepancy between, for example, how they talk about pair-work and how they use it in the classroom? What are the implications of the answers for future materials development and for ABET teacher training?

1.1.3 What are the Contextual Influences?

Finally, in order to explore my original question fully, I needed to open up the interplay between teacher, text and context.

ELP intended the Course to be used nationally, across regions and for adults in different types of jobs and living conditions. So ELP expected the Course to be flexible enough to be useful in a variety of contexts with their particular enabling and constraining influences on teaching practice.

When I set out on the research, my question was: Is the Course adaptable in context? I wanted to watch both rural and urban classes to see how the Course was implemented differently depending on variations in the structural and socio-cultural contexts (Cornbleth, 1990). For reasons of time and the demise of the rural NGO I had intended to work through, I worked only with urban-based ABET teachers. They were all employed by companies, working in fairly similar contexts. So this question changed in the process of the research. The question changed to: which contextual factors influence the relationship between teachers and course materials and how do they affect it?

1.2 Introducing the English Literacy Project

The English Literacy Project (ELP) is a non-governmental organization working "in the field of Adult Basic Education (ABE) through the provision of English literacy and numeracy materials for use in learning groups wherever they are situated" (Mission Statement, 1994). Established in 1983, ELP saw itself as aligned to the mass democratic movement, was a founder member of the National Literacy Co-operation (NLC) and had a 'progressive' orientation towards literacy work. "ELP believes that literacy must be seen as a tool for empowerment that enables people to enhance and develop the confidence and skills to take control of their own lives and to participate fully in society" (1994).

ELP ran adult literacy classes for unions, did some teacher training, and developed materials. ELP published an English literacy course in 1984; started an easy-English newspaper for adults in 1986, *Active Voice*, which was distributed nationally and ran for 10 years; published several easy English readers in the early 1990s; and then launched *The ELP English Literacy Course for Adults* and *The ELP Numeracy Course for Adults* in 1995. Over 200 000 workbooks of the Course have been sold nation-wide.

Because of the changing political and funding context in which ABET NGO's find themselves, ELP is currently on the verge of closing.

Although ELP wrote two courses: *The ELP English Literacy Course for Adults* and *The ELP Numeracy Course for Adults*, this research project looks only at the use of the English literacy course. Looking at the numeracy course would have involved me in debates about the methodology and conceptions of mathematics teaching that are outside of my area of competence.

1.3 A Note on Style

This research report has two potential audiences in mind: academics and my fellow practitioners in the field of Adult Basic Education and Training. Writing to meet academic criteria meant that I needed to produce rigorous research and an accurate reflection of the ideas and concepts I gained from other academics. Writing for practitioners meant that I could not presume people had done the same reading or were familiar with the debates. I wanted practitioners without a

background of reading in curriculum theory to get a sense of the issues and gain enough information to be able to formulate their own response. This meant that I had to spell out ideas in some detail.

As often as possible I have contextualised the ideas I used - stating from whom they come or in what context the person wrote them. That might sound a bit long-winded to academics who are familiar with the concepts, but I have found that locating ideas in their historical context enables a much clearer understanding of what a debate is about.

Because of its context as part of an M Ed course, this research report is individual, not participatory research. Nevertheless, I wanted the ABET teachers who were part of the study to be able to read and learn from it. So the writing style is consciously accessible and explains the educational 'jargon' that is used. After years of working to 'demystify knowledge', of writing in plain English, of simplifying the vocabulary used to explain complex ideas and concepts, I did not want to betray that commitment just because this research report means entering an academic world. So this is an academic piece of writing in easy English - a small contribution to the ideal of democratising research.

1.4 A Note on Structure

The structure of this research report is slightly unconventional - the literature review chapter follows rather than precedes the chapter on methodology. This happened because the methodology chosen is ethnography and I was concerned to provide a thick description as possible, not only of an aspect of ABET classroom reality but also of the conceptual tools that enabled me to see that reality more clearly.

This research report is structured like a journey. In chapter 2, the rationale, I explore where I came from, i.e. the changing ABET context of the last decade and I attempt to pinpoint what lessons were gained with regard to curriculum issues. That provides the base camp from which the journey sets out. In chapter 3, the methodology, I choose ethnography as a means of travelling and learn how to do that properly. I also describe how I organised the field trip I went on. In chapter 4, the literature review, I collect the equipment needed on the journey and practise using it. The readings described and then explored in relation to each other provide me with the conceptual tools to think about curriculum and the interplay between

teachers and texts. They enable me to frame the particular phenomenon I want to observe and interpret. Then chapter 5 is the field trip, the immersion into the pedagogical reality of ABET teachers working in an urban, industrial context. During this trip, I use the conceptual tools I gathered in an unconscious way: the focus is on what I saw, not on the lens through which I was looking. In chapter 6, I am back home, sorting the photographs into albums. I use the conceptual tools of the literature chapter to make sense of, interpret and realise the implications of what I have seen.

Richard Winter maintains that, for there to be a possibility of transformation, "the initiators of research must put themselves 'at risk' through the process of the investigation" (Winter, 1989, p60). During this research journey I risked my assumptions about what teachers should and should not do with course materials in ABET classrooms, and have emerged with a transformed perception of the relationship. That gives me the courage to risk an unconventional structure, trusting it will add to the clarity of the emerging insights.

CHAPTER 2 Rationale:
ABET In a Moment of Transition

2.1 Introduction

This chapter sets up the base camp, the context which gave rise to the research question. It describes the political and educational context in which adult literacy work took place during the late 1980s and early 1990s, looking in particular at how ELP's conception of curriculum developed within that context.[3] It begins to answer the three sub-questions of the research - about the Course being a convivial tool, the innovative methodology and the contextual influences - by describing ELP's intentions and the pressures it experienced with regard to those intentions.

This chapter constitutes the rationale for this research report. It might seem unusual for a rationale to describe a context rather than to outline a theoretical position. But the ELP course and my research question in relation to that course came out of needs and debates in the practice of ABET, not out of theory or research. Catherine Cornbleth provides a strong theoretical justification for looking at context in order to understand the impulses for curriculum development and change. So in this chapter I use her theory of curriculum as a lens for looking at the context in which ELP's curriculum development took place.

The context and definition of adult literacy work, after being quite static in the late 1970s and 80s, changed rapidly in the early 1990s. Adult basic education underwent a major transition: from 'literacy' to 'ABE' and 'ABET'; from small to larger scale, from ad hoc to a more formalised system with levels and exams. This opened up exciting opportunities, new challenges - and also the responsibility to capture valuable lessons and preserve them for use in the new era. *The ELP English Literacy Course for Adults* was an attempt to capture the best of what ELP had learned about literacy during the years of the struggle against apartheid and make it available to the education system in the New South Africa.

[3] This chapter draws on a close personal involvement in the English Literacy Project over 15 years and aims to interpret trends that affected ELP's curriculum work. It is not a carefully researched, definitive history of the adult literacy field and policy developments. That task is superbly done by *A Survey of Adult Basic Education in South Africa in the 90s*, which unfortunately arrived in the book shops too late for me to draw on in this chapter.

2.2 A Definition of Curriculum - Catherine Cornbleth

Catherine Cornbleth (1990) theorises about the relationship between learning, teaching, curriculum materials and the context in which they operate. She offers a definition of curriculum "as contextualised social process" (p13).

Seeing curriculum as a "social process" means that "curriculum" refers not only to a written document - a plan or a set of materials to guide teaching, but is understood more widely to include the lived reality, the dynamic interactions between students, teachers, knowledge and milieu that happen in the classroom. "Curriculum as product, or object, the conventional view, is seen as one aspect of the context that shapes curriculum practice" (p24). Cornbleth is part of a tradition of educationists who make the link between curriculum and context (see Stenhouse 1975, Hamilton 1976, Grundy 1987). Her contribution to the debate is her analysis of curriculum as 'contextualised'. The other theorists emphasise the influence of the 'context' in which a curriculum is implemented in general terms, while Cornbleth adds an analysis of the different elements which together make up that context.

Cornbleth subdivides context into the structural context of the education system and the socio-cultural (sometimes she calls it socio-economic) context of the society at large. The structural context ranges from the immediacy of the classroom and school through to the administration and policy making bodies at city, district, state and national levels. It involves the hierarchies of power, the established ways of operating, and the beliefs, norms and culture of the educational system. Of particular concern is how the structural context shapes the curriculum's selection, organization, treatment and distribution of the knowledge made available to students (p6, 26). The socio-cultural context consists of those demographic, social, economic and political conditions, ideologies, traditions and events that have a direct or indirect bearing on curriculum and curriculum change. (p6, 31) The socio-cultural context often provides the impetus for educational change, while the structural context mediates and shapes the nature of that change (p31, 32).

In addition, Cornbleth comes from a 'critical' perspective. For her, that means the following: that she engages in wide ranging questioning and probing beneath the surface of appearances, while not losing out on empirical rigour and logical argument (p25); that her viewpoint is not

value neutral but is opposed to domination and holds the potential for being emancipatory (p56); and that she sees people's intentions and actions within in a social context that can be both limiting and enabling (p3).

This definition of curriculum combined with a critical perspective enables her to provide "theoretical work on the contextual dynamic that addresses the multiple layers of education systems" (p99). She investigates the concept of the hidden curriculum, analyses empirical research into curriculum change efforts, looks at state control of curriculum policy and comes to one main conclusion: "Curriculum is unlikely to change in the absence of supportive structural changes, which are unlikely to be initiated in the absence of external pressures or supports" (p35).

I will use Cornbleth's conclusion to illuminate ELP's work during the years of transition in the field of ABET.

2.3 The Context for the Interplay between ABET Teachers and Texts

2.3.1 The Pre-1990 Context

Prior to 1990, the socio-cultural context impacted very directly on curriculum work in adult literacy. During those years of the struggle against apartheid, literacy work was often justified in terms of its contribution to the struggle. Political affiliations were debated intensely and were somehow presumed to determine one's methodological approach. The content and methodology used in the classroom was justified directly in terms of political (or religious, or economic) purpose.

This happened because the structural, i.e. the educational, context of adult literacy work was minimal. There was no overall co-ordination, control or policy to give direction to curriculum work. Government commitment to provision was negligible, with an allocation of less than 1% of the education budget to adults. The DET (Department of Education and Training) had a few night schools, mainly in the 'homelands'. There were two or three commercial organizations struggling to make a living from providing literacy to industry. And there were a handful of alternative, politically motivated literacy organizations which in 1986 banded together to form the National Literacy Co-operation (NLC). In 1989 a department of UNIBO hosted the first

national literacy conference that drew people from across the ideological divide. At that conference, Ed French, a researcher and eminent participant in the field, estimated that all the people in South Africa involved in adult literacy in a full-time, professional capacity, would maybe be equivalent in number to the staff of an ordinary high school (*Mathlasedi*, November 1989).

The alternative literacy organizations were particularly free from structural constraints. Ironically, they were freed by a law through which the government had sought to control educational work. The Bantu Employees' In-Service Training Act "required that groups which administer existing literacy programmes must register and provide proof that the group did not deviate from the existing school policy" (Matabane, p347). Alternative literacy organizations were refused registration. But as the DET had no political or educational legitimacy, and as alternative literacy organizations received their money from donors outside the country, this lack of registration placed them outside the educational system and gave complete freedom of content and methodology in teaching and curriculum development.

Yet this freedom operated on a very small scale. Groups of literacy practitioners worked with few resources, in isolation from one another and from within particular ideological loyalties. As a result, there was little specialisation. Literacy organizations often fulfilled all the functions of an education department: they organised and taught the classes, trained and employed the teachers (also known as facilitators, co-ordinators, animators, to distinguish them from school teachers), produced the course materials to use in the classes, and provided assessment and certificates. This meant that organizations became associated with particular methods embodied in particular sets of materials, with their training revolving around the use of those materials.

The situation was compounded by the poverty in which literacy organizations operated. This meant that materials were often written without sufficient resources for research and development and were cheaply produced. Training courses for teachers were usually two to five days. And learners were lucky if they could afford even one textbook - offering a range or a choice was financially not possible.

The effect of this was a mentality of competing packages. Client companies or community organizations expected literacy organizations to provide the whole learning and teaching package. Literacy organizations (be they commercial or alternative) competed against each other on all fronts, rather than co-operating and specialising. Course materials became the trademark of organizations and were often not made available for public scrutiny.

Within that context there were two trends with regard to the training of teachers in the use of course materials. One was adhered to by the more established literacy organizations, the state night schools and commercial providers. They expected teachers to slavishly follow the materials provided by that particular literacy organization. The other was a reaction against that trend on the part of younger, more progressive organizations: to reject all available materials as patronising or otherwise inappropriate and expect teachers to create their own in response to learner requests. Both trends were associated with a fair amount of dogmatism: the first insisted that the materials provided were the best and only ones, the second argued for a strong form of learner-centredness and developed into a mistrust of any structured materials.

Both trends had negative effects on classroom practice. The first meant that teachers were stuck in one way of teaching and could not upgrade their skills or shift their orientations. The second meant that teachers suffered from a lot of anxiety about what to teach in the next lesson and learners had no overall direction or coherence to their learning programme. By 1991, Motala's research for NEPI found ABET teachers looking for a way out of that impasse. "Interviews with teachers revealed that they preferred being provided with materials mainly because they did not have the time to develop their own" (p22). But teachers did not want to be tied to one approach only. "All expressed an interest in being able to use a variety of materials" (p23).

In the next section I want to outline historically what ELP learned about curriculum and teachers in this context.

2.3.2 ELP's Curriculum Learning Pre-1990

Several of ELP's founder members served their apprenticeship in adult literacy in the late 1970s and early 80s, when 'progressive' literacy workers saw Paulo Freire's approach to consciousness-raising through literacy as the ideal combination of teaching skills and political awareness. Freire posited that learners discuss topics of relevance to their lives, critically reflecting on problems and engaging in action where appropriate. The teacher took on the role of facilitator, engaged in a two way dialogue with learners. After discussion, learners would copy the key words, then break them up into syllables and create new words from the syllables.

It became apparent that although this method might work with people learning initial literacy in their own language, it was not appropriate for people who were developing their literacy skills while simultaneously learning the English language. Discussions were minimal, because learners lacked the English vocabulary. The syllable method did not work at all with a writing system as irregular and unsyllabic as English. Trying to create reading passages using 'man, land, tax' and 'Putco, bus, run', soon became ridiculous. What was needed was a systematic way of teaching English language to adults that was more structured than discussion but more relevant than phonics or traditional grammar based teaching. This offered itself in the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) approach being used with foreigners learning the language and the English as a Second Language (ESL) approach being used with Vietnamese, Pakistani and other immigrants living in English-speaking environments. EFL teaches English by gradually building up language structures, in a communicative way. ESL builds on EFL, but has less emphasis on language structures and a stronger emphasis on functional, practical skills which enable learners to deal with institutions of everyday life.

For the purposes of this chapter, it would take too long to describe how ELP tried to integrate consciousness-raising empowerment with EFL\ESL literacy teaching in its first course in the early 1980s. But it will be useful to mention some of the lessons regarding curriculum integration and the relationship between teachers and texts that we gained from observing that course being used.

- The course drew more on EFL than ESL. It taught English using a progression of language structures as the organising principle underlying the situational, communicative dialogues. Teachers, being second-language English speakers

themselves and insecure about their own use of grammar, picked up on the underlying grammar and turned it into meaningless drilling for accuracy. Learners who could already communicate in broken English lost their communicative confidence. A new course would need to present the methodology for teaching English in such a way that fluency and the ability to communicate were prioritised.

- Because learners lacked the vocabulary in English, the course provided for awareness raising discussions in mother tongue, parallel to learning English. For these discussions to be truly empowering, learners needed additional information. This information was drawn from history, maths, current affairs, health, geography i.e. a range of disciplines. That created insoluble tensions around prioritising the contents of lessons. A new course would need to incorporate empowerment into the English learning in such a way that learners had enough vocabulary and knowledge to participate.

- The course provided a very set sequence and structure. This militated against learners' opinions and stories emerging, or their functional language and literacy needs being satisfied during the English parts of the lessons. A new course would need to be more open-ended and encourage learners to insert themselves into both the subject matter and the English language learning.

- For teachers, the course provided visual aids and detailed, step by step teachers' notes on what and how to teach in each lesson. But teachers found the volume of reading too tedious, and their own initiative in response to learners was oppressed by such detailed guidelines. It also fed into their existing, (to use Freire's term) 'banking' conception of knowledge and education: they were being told what to do, so they would tell learners what to do. A new course would need to provide support for teachers that was more accessible and more generic, i.e. offering explanation and stimulation rather than prescription.

- We also learned a lot about layout and design and how to present material so that the content and purpose of each exercise would be immediately obvious to teachers and learners.

After becoming aware of the ways in which that first course was inappropriate to its context, ELP spent several years of reflection and experimentation to find a new approach to

developing materials. During those years, ELP started a learner newspaper and published several readers in easy English. Imbued with the struggle for liberation, those publications contained information about political or functional topics requested by learners, and stories written by learners. Occasionally, learners participated in the publishing process.

These years of experimentation coincided with the most heated years of struggle to rid the country of the apartheid state. Because adult literacy work, particularly the work of the alternative organizations, was not mediated through any education system, the socio-political turmoil of late 1980s impacted directly on any curriculum work undertaken. We had intensive discussions about the meaning and purpose of literacy work and whether it was even a worthwhile endeavour in the face of a national crisis. There was no capacity to plan long-term or to formulate a coherent, systematic learning programme for adults. In that context, politically orientated readers, newspapers and lessons with a relatively short life span were an appropriate response to adults' learning needs.

But all that changed in 1990.

2.3.3 ABET Policy in the Making: 1990 - 1995

The turning point came with the dramatic socio-political change in South Africa. A new era began in February 1990 with the unbanning of political organizations and the release of Nelson Mandela, unleashing a new energy and vision for the future. Suddenly South Africa had a future and everything, including the purpose of adult literacy, could be reconsidered. The United Nations provided timeous structural support by declaring 1990 International Literacy Year. When educational policy planning became a priority in preparation for the New South Africa, adult education was included. Learners' attitudes also changed. They no longer wanted learning to answer their immediate questions, but to help them prepare for new jobs and possibilities in the future. Discussing the needs of adult education in the new SA on International Literacy Day in September 1990, learners said: "There should be a syllabus for adult education, different from the syllabus for children, that gives us different subjects and standards to measure progress. We need certificates for adult education" (ELP Annual Report, 1989-90, p3). The demand for systematic, structured learning was clear.

Educational policy work took up this challenge. First the National Education Policy Investigation (NEPI) (1992), and then the COSATU Participatory Research Project (PRP)

(1993) set out to research the requirements of a national system that could deliver education to adults on a mass scale. Their research and discussions transformed adult literacy first into Adult Basic Education (ABE) and then into Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET). This expanded understanding of what ABE entails was then endorsed by mass democratic organizations at the conference to inaugurate the South African Committee for Adult Basic Education (SACABE) (1993) and accepted by industry through the National Training Board (NTB) (1994). In time for the new government in May 1994, the Centre for Education Policy Development created an "Implementation Plan for Education and Training" which included a report from the task team for ABET (1994). It outlined the work needed to put in place new governance structures, financing, legislation and mass provision for ABET. In 1995, the policy work culminated in the "Interim Guidelines" for a national ABET framework, published by the Department of Education.

This policy work led to a growing interest in adult basic education and training. The number of people working in the field increased. Companies started implementing a literacy component as part of their training. Universities raised funds and employed people in ABE departments. Even publishers became interested in the field, investigating the possibilities of publishing ABET learning materials.

With regard to curriculum, the policy work created a whole new framework. The framework aimed to provide guidelines for mass delivery, which was a new concept to people working in the field, bringing with it completely new challenges. As part of the NQF (National Qualifications Framework) it set four levels of ABET with equivalence to schooling, from initial mother-tongue literacy onwards to a general school leaving certificate. It created subject areas: communications, mathematics, science and technology, developmental studies, social studies. It generated a new language for talking about curriculum: generic competencies, outcomes-based, core skills, transfer. It provided the basis for a new look at assessment and certification for learners.

Important changes in the structural context of ABE flowed from the policy work. A major structural change started being implemented by the Independent Examinations Board (IEB). Through a process of national consultation, the IEB gradually developed outcomes for ABET levels 1, 2 and 3 in two subject areas and started providing nationally accredited examinations. This standard setting process affected teaching and curriculum development in the whole field, providing people with clarity, direction and new criteria for decision-making.

Another structural change came from donors. Donors became less concerned with political position and more concerned with efficiency, productivity, self generated income and partnerships between non-governmental organizations (NGO's) and business. Their funding criteria for ABET NGO's changed: the issue was no longer quality work in relation to the target audience but the need to fit into policy priorities. For example, the Joint Education Trust (JET) took the cost of curriculum and materials development off their priorities list and handed it to publishers.

ELP participated only marginally in the policy work, partly because we were not skilled as researchers and primarily because we wanted to contribute to the impending mass provision in the way we knew best: put into concrete form the curriculum learning we had done during the preceding years. Mandated by an NLC workshop in March 1991 and working in consultation with about twenty NLC member organizations, ELP set out to create another course. It took longer than expected: ELP finally launched *The ELP English Literacy Course for Adults* and *The ELP Numeracy Course for Adults* in May 1995.

2.4 The Design Logic of *The ELP English Literacy Course for Adults*

2.4.1 The Curriculum Paradigm

ELP conceived of and wrote the Course slightly before and during the years of policy development for the ABET field. ELP drew on its experience of the previous decade, whilst also adjusting the Course in accordance with the ongoing policy developments. ELP course developers attempted to do justice to both the 'old' paradigm of empowerment and liberation, and the 'new' paradigm of outcomes and assessment whilst teaching language and literacy skills.

Cornbleth argues against the validity of courses as such. "A packaged curriculum cannot anticipate local possibilities" (p34), she claims, because it cannot accommodate student generated questions or conclusions which were not anticipated or condoned by the curriculum developers. She argues that a critical approach to curriculum needs to create space for teachers' and students' personal knowledge, for creativity and critique, for student-generated questions,

hypotheses and interpretations (p34), so that students can engage with knowledge and make it their own as they choose.

As described above, ELP shares Cornbleth's concern with emancipation, empowerment and a conception of knowledge as being generated by learners, not as transmitted by teachers and accepted by learners. Yet, working in context of insufficiently skilled teachers, we came to the opposite conclusion with regard to the relationship between a 'packaged curriculum' and 'local possibilities'. We were concerned to embed the emancipatory conception in the Course so that teachers had a tool and model for practically implementing 'student-generated questions' and other emancipatory methods in the classroom. So ELP set out to achieve what Cornbleth, from her American experience, sees as not possible: an open-ended curriculum document, a course which, while providing the structure and guidance of a learning programme, also invites learners' opinions and realities into the classroom. This attempt at integration can be seen in the course objectives:

> For learners, the Course aims to provide:
> -Communicative ESL competence in daily life. This is a basis for further learning in adult basic education.
> -Literacy skills and social understanding that allows access to the common institutions in society.
> -Numeracy skills for daily life and as the basis for scientific understanding.
> -Cognitive and learning skills with particular emphasis on confidence-building and assertiveness
> -Non-racist, non-sexist and democratic values.
> (Deetlefs & Steinberg, 1993, p193)

Analysing these course objectives with regard to their underlying orientations, it seems to me that a technical orientation is reflected in the focus on particular 'skills' and 'competence' as a 'basis for further learning'; a liberatory impulse comes through in the inclusion of values such as 'access to institutions in society', 'assertiveness', 'non-racist', 'non-sexist' and 'democratic'; while the attempt to bridge that gap is expressed in such practical uses of knowledge as 'communicative', 'for daily life', 'understanding' and 'confidence-building'.

H.S. Bhola (1994) says that 'teaching materials express our philosophies and our methodologies' (p99). At times, there can be a difference between the rhetoric needed to justify and make politically acceptable what a set of materials is doing and what those materials actually portray in their pages. For a full expression of the curriculum paradigm one needs to look at the course content and methodology.

2.4.2 The Course Content

ELP understood its course content to include both the English language and literacy skills to be developed and the subject matter to be covered. The language and literacy skills were intrinsically linked to the subject matter, because we worked from the premise that acquiring a second language and literacy is "embedded in the pursuit of other ends" (Hall, 1994, p22). In fact, these 'other ends' appear as the obvious content, with language and literacy skills subsumed beneath them. Yet the skills are not a random response to the subject matter, but are carefully developed from simple to complex, from familiar to unfamiliar across the Course.

For the purposes of the Course we defined the level of literacy skill as functional English literacy. At the entry level this presumed that people could read and write in their mother-tongue and had some familiarity with spoken English. At the exit level this presumed that learners would be able to function in an English, literate environment and embark on a more formal education if they chose to. "In English language terms, learners will have covered the basic English structures they need for communication. In literacy terms they cover the skills needed to provide them with access to common institutions in society" (Deetlefs and Steinberg, 1993, p196) .

This Course was more ESL oriented than the first one. In terms of subject matter "the main feature of the Course content is the focus on life skills and communicative English" (p193). Some of the life skills dealt with are: talking on the phone, asserting oneself, deciphering signs in town, reading adverts, labels and calendars, filling in forms and negotiating around them, going shopping, negotiating at work, understanding payslips, writing letters. All are immediately useful in people's lives. They fit the beginning level language and literacy skills. They open up possibilities for further learning. And at the same time they lend themselves to discussion, debating opinions and shifts in awareness. Teaching English through life skills meets learners in the world they know and have opinions about, and gradually introduces them to the world opened up by literacy.

The topics were chosen mainly in response to learner needs. In line with the emancipatory adult literacy tradition of conducting needs analyses, we spent time and creativity asking learners what they wanted to learn and what they needed English and literacy for in their lives. The focus on life skills, the addition of numeracy, the emphasis on communicative situations, and the addition of grammar teaching all developed in response to their answers. For greater detail,

we researched people's English, literacy and numeracy needs at work and in institutions, and we consulted with other literacy practitioners.

2.4.3 The Course Structure

The ELP English Literacy Course for Adults together with *The ELP Numeracy Course for Adults* consists of 22 workbooks: 14 for English, 6 for numeracy and 2 integrating both. (For a list of the workbooks, see Appendix 1.) The workbook format means that learners write in their books and that task instructions are addressed to learners. It is assumed that each learner has a book so they can chart their own progress. But the books are not meant for self study, they assume the mediation of a teacher and a group setting.

Each workbook consists of a series of exercises for learners to do. It starts with a checklist of skills to assess if learners are at the correct level for that workbook, moves through about 6 chapters, and ends with a test to assess the skills acquired and to enable a sense of achievement. Each workbook is self-contained and deals with one subject area. Language and literacy skills are gradually built up and it is not possible to shift the sequence of chapters within books.

Some workbooks have a focus on life-skills that are familiar to people in their personal context (e.g. *Speak English, Read Around Town, Fill in Forms, English at Work*). Some focus on more academic uses of literacy, like text interpretation or a process approach to writing (e.g. *Reading Stories, Writing Letters*). Others still provide a communicative approach to learning grammar (e.g. *Present Tense, Past Tense, The Future*). Sometimes several workbooks deal with a similar subject area, e.g. there are two workbooks on consumer economics and three on work. Depending on the subject matter, workbooks have different skills emphases (e.g. on speaking or on writing) and make use of different types of tasks. The recommended teaching time for a workbook is about 20 hours.

The original design logic, inspired by COSATU's advocacy of modular units of learning, was for learning groups to mix and match the workbooks within two or three broad bands of competence. This allowed learning groups to make choices in accordance with their context and interest in the subject matter. We wanted to offer beginner learners a choice of books to pick up and use according to their own purpose, just like literate people do. We did not want

to push learners into a lock-step course where the teacher and the education system control the learning.

But that changed, partly for reasons of internal coherence and mainly because of contextual pressures. Some subject matter required higher level language and literacy skills, so those books had to be placed later in the Course. We also struggled with the capacity to create enough books to give learners a wide choice in each band. Mainly though, teachers and programme administrators wanted the Course to be in a set sequence. The element of choice did not fit their conception of educational or financial planning. They wanted a clear sequence, so they could fit learners into the newly emerging ABET levels.

So now the workbooks follow each other in a set sequence. The English and literacy skills become gradually more difficult and get recycled within and between chapters and books. It is still possible to shift the sequence of the workbooks slightly depending on the interests of the learning group, but not much.

Each workbook is structured in chapters, with coherence of content and skills as the guiding principle for length. Unlike many other courses it is not structured in lessons, which use time as a guiding principle. So teachers have the freedom to structure lesson units of learning as is best for their learners. When tasks or exercises are used for the first time they are surrounded by a lot of step-by-step guidance, but as they get re-used the 'scaffolding' is decreased, for example, the technique for learning new English words introduced in *Write On*. This happens to an even greater extent between books. The assumption is that teachers, and later learners, will internalise these learning skills and become able to use them without instructions.

2.4.4 The Language Teaching Methodology

The tasks and exercises used in the course are based on ELP's commitment to awareness raising and on the understanding of how to teach a second, or, to use the more 'politically correct' term, an additional language.

> Overall the methodology is eclectic, with the influence of different strands being noticeable. The most dominant influences are:
> -The tradition of ESL teaching which emphasises life skills and access to social institutions, which we learned from British sources.

> -The emphasis on empowerment that comes from Freire and was further developed in the popular education movement of Central and South America, which we learned about from Canadians.
> The methodology of popular education stresses participative learning, not 'the one-way transmission of knowledge'. We consider participative or active learning to be the key element in the development of cognitive skills because it draws on what learners already know and engages them in extending this knowledge for themselves.
> (Deetlefs and Steinberg, 1993, p196)

> The exercises that particularly promote participative learning and communication in the course are:
> - reflective and evaluative discussions,
> - research and project work,
> - co-operative learning in pairs and small groups,
> - exercises that draw on learners own experience and opinions,
> - problem solving tasks,
> - role plays and speech making where people assert themselves.
> (Deetlefs, 1993, p5)

But the Course also takes into account teachers' and learners' more traditional expectations of learning, so there are spelling exercises, gapfills, matching, multiple choice and other tasks that learners can complete with the teacher's help. The course writers attempted to make the methodology as explicit as possible, aiming to provide a systematic and varied learning programme.

In the content section above, I pointed out how the Course integrates skills and subject matter. Here I want to describe briefly how the Course integrates skills and methodology. For example, in *Write On,* the skill taught in the last chapter is to write a short story about oneself. The exercises leading up to that include reading, discussion, pair-work, and various writing tasks. First, learners read a short life story about someone they can identify with, discuss it, check understanding and practice spelling some of the useful words. Then, learners talk about their own lives, asking and answering questions in pairs. Later, learners write: single words to complete sentences about their own lives, whole sentences in response to questions and finally a paragraph with their own story. The exercises are varied, communicative, participative, integrate second language and literacy learning, involve a gradual build-up of skill and revolve around meaningful subject matter.

Regarding language learning, the organising principle of the methodology is to work with whole texts in a meaningful context which is established through pictures and discussion questions. The exercises encourage fluency rather than accuracy, except in the grammar workbooks. The language learning cycle moves from meaning, to presentation, through

guided practice to free practice. For literacy learning it is similar, except that there is an additional principle of functionality: learners are not expected to write things that would be unnecessary in real life. For example, they fill in forms but do not write any, they write a story in the past tense but do not translate stories from present to past tense.

Another feature of the Course methodology are the many unanswered questions that are posed. There are questions to check comprehension, to stimulate discussion, to personalise issues and enable transfer to learners lives, and there are questions about subject matter, about grammatical principles, about the effectiveness of exercises. The Course does not answer these questions - they are left open-ended to invite the interaction and interpretation of teachers and learners.

2.4.5 The Identity of the Learners

The Course is written for adults with maybe one or two years of schooling who want to learn English and improve their literacy skills. In NQF (National Qualification Framework) terms it fits into ABET levels 1 and 2 for Communications in English.

Learners' lives are reflected in the Course in several ways: through the content of stories, the real life problems posed, the projects in which learners bring issues of concern to the classroom, and the images. The course uses authentic language and texts that reflect learners' voices. Opinions offered for discussion are quotes from existing learners. Stories are drawn mainly from published and unpublished learner writings. Learners coming to the Course are able to identify their voice and their reality in the texts. As Paulo Freire says: "People must learn to read their reality and write their own history". The discussions and the projects are structured as an invitation for each group of learners to insert their particular concerns and issues into the learning.

The visual aspect of the Course is a striking reflection of the identity of the learners. The Course uses a combination of drawings and photographs, but it is particularly the photographs that provide its distinctive look. Many photographs were specially commissioned and portray adults in everyday situations using language and literacy skills - as shoppers, discerning consumers, workers, messengers, hawkers, shop stewards, negotiators or urban citizens. There are also photographs of general adult life - people wearing fashionable or ethnic clothes, mothers, couples, families and mass meetings. Then there are lot of

photographs of adults as learners - working with paper, pen and books, discussing in pairs and in groups, acting out communicative exercises.

The stories and photographs provide a cumulative identity of learners as competent adults engaged in life and learning. Being a literacy learner means being a capable adult.

2.4.6 ELP's Construct of the Teacher

From ELP's experience of teaching and teacher training, we selected several features of literacy teachers that the Course needed to cater for.

One was that, although literacy teachers are committed and eager, they are often not very skilled. Many have not completed their own secondary education, are second-language English speakers and have attended maybe one week of teacher training. They need support in the form of an overall teaching programme which they can follow. Another was that teachers themselves do not read very much. They are unlikely to read textbooks for teachers or teachers notes contained in a separate book. So notes to the teachers need to be short and clear and placed just where they are used. We also accepted that as full time, Freire-inspired educators we had much more experience of and commitment to an emancipatory methodology than most teachers. In our experience, most literacy teachers, even where they aspire to progressive ideals, are strongly influenced by the models of transmission and rote-learning they experienced as school children. So an alternative way of doing things needed to be presented in an unthreatening, accessible way. And finally, we wanted to counter both the prevailing trends in ABET: that teachers must either follow materials slavishly or that they must break away from course materials completely and create their own materials for each class.

We addressed these realities in several ways.

We created the course as an overall programme for teaching and learning. It provides a systematic build-up of skill and knowledge through a variety of activities. The methodology is embedded in the detailed steps contained in the exercises. The exercises provide sufficient practice to develop the skills. For potentially threatening participatory-type exercises, there is often a photograph to illustrate how they can be done. In addition, there are suggestions and open-ended exercises which encourage teachers to make adaptations for their classes.

One page of teachers' notes at the front of each workbook outlines its purpose and the skills taught in each chapter, while three pages at the back talk about the why and how of the different types of exercises. In addition, there are simple instructions at the beginning of each exercise. These instructions are written in the language the teacher would use to address the class. The intention was to make the Course user-friendly and easy to teach from.

2.4.7 Concluding Comment

Ruth Wajnryb (1992, p126-7) uses Stevick's concept of "whole learning materials" to provide criteria for the evaluation of language teaching materials. Materials should be expressed in language that has currency outside the classroom; they should treat the world and reality as learners know them to be and take advantage of adult learners' knowledge; learners should be able to relate to them experientially; they should allow for learner opinions, disagreements and choices; they should enable meaningful communicative interaction, not mechanical repetition; and they should contribute to the learners' sense of safety or security in the learning context. I think that *The ELP English Literacy Course for Adults* satisfies these criteria.

In terms of its design, the ELP course also satisfies the criteria set by Eisner's metaphor of a convivial tool. By reflecting the lives of learners and by including many open-ended questions, it encourages the voices of learners without predetermining what these voices should be saying. Through its workbook format it provides structure and a model for teachers to expand on. By combining subject matter and methodology, it intends to make teachers more confident in the classroom. Whether and how these criteria are satisfied in its implementation, will be seen in chapter 5.

2.5 Contextual Influences on the Course Development

Re-reading this chapter so far, I am struck by the change in tone and language between the time before and after the policy work for ABET. There seems to be a radical discontinuity in the questions and issues of concern.

When ELP embarked on the Course in 1991 we were driven by internal questions, or rather, questions concerned with the conception of knowledge in the curriculum:

- How to create a learning programme that would both empower adults and give them basic English language and literacy skills?
- How to create a learning programme that would both give clear guidance and be open-ended, so that it encouraged learners' voices to emerge and located power of choice with the teacher and the learners?

By the time ELP finished the Course in 1995, we were faced with external questions, or rather, questions coming from the curriculum context:

- How does the Course fit in with the subject areas and levels of ABET set by the IEB and the 'Interim Guidelines'?
- What outcomes will learners doing the Course achieve and will they pass the examinations?

These sets of questions are not necessarily incompatible, particularly since ELP's internal concerns meshed well with the IEB's educational objectives for the new system of adult examinations. But because the ABET structural context was changing so rapidly and unpredictably, ELP found it hard to develop satisfactory answers for all of them at the same time. ABET policy makers were working with a traditional notion of curriculum - that of curriculum as a document with official legitimacy which provides an overarching framework for a particular field of learning. They expected materials development to be subordinate to and following on from curriculum policy development. At ELP we were materials developers who wanted to give expression to our conception of curriculum through learning-teaching materials, and did not want to wait for the policy process to be complete before embarking on the task. Both the policy and the course process took five years, by which time ABET NGO's were struggling for money. So the timing did not favour ELP's course development, but using the impetus provided by the socio-cultural and structural changes was the only way the Course could have happened.

Cornbleth outlines a practical implication of her conception of curriculum as contextualised social process regarding the possibilities and limitations of curriculum transformation. She argues that curriculum planners, developers and implementers need to work together in new ways. (In South African terminology that would be ABET policy makers, materials developers and teachers). Given that "changing a curriculum involves changing its context" (p27), understanding how a curriculum might be changed requires understanding the culture of the education system and its various sub-systems, as well as the relevant socio-cultural influences in a lot of detail (p30). Teachers, curriculum developers or policy makers working in isolation

from each other are unlikely to generate sufficient insight or political influence to implement the necessary combination of changes. Curriculum change thus requires a new role for teachers and curriculum specialists (p33), roles in which responsibility is shared in the process of dynamic interaction.

At ELP we were very aware of working parallel to rather than in response to or in co-operation with the policy makers who were shaping the ABET context. As a team of teachers and materials developers, we had both feet in the classroom and one eye on policy developments, hoping that the course would fit into the new system on completion. As it turned out, feedback indicates that teachers love the course while policy makers and administrators ignore it, which is a precarious position to be in regarding book sales. Cornbleth is right when she argues that teachers, curriculum developers and policy planners should work together. But these groups of people have such different skills, perspectives and priorities, that co-operation is difficult to achieve.

It might be worth pointing out what aspects of the Course changed in response to the volatile context while it was being written. The main change was in the structure. Originally conceived in a modular format for classes to mix and match modules in accordance with their levels and interests, the Course had to be restructured and sequenced to fit the outcomes set for ABET levels 1 and 2 in Communications. The Course needed to become a neat package, suitable for training in industry or for education department tenders. Another change was in the price. For as long as ELP received donor funding for its development work, the Course could be sold at less than what it cost to photocopy. Once donors no longer saw ABET as a weapon against apartheid, but as a field of education like any other, they shifted the responsibility for materials development on to publishers. So ELP embarked on a partnership with a national publisher. This brought some advantages with regard to marketing and distribution, but tripled the price of the Course, placing it out of reach of community organizations.

The one thing ELP did not change was the conception of knowledge embedded in the course: the focus on life skills as a way to combine empowerment with beginner language and literacy skills; the participative methodology; the open-ended questions and projects inviting learners to insert their lives into the learning. We had to trust that our contextualised learning of the last decade would be appropriate to the new ABET context.

2.6 In Conclusion

"Curriculum causality and change (or stability) are seen to involve the interplay of biographical (personal and professional), structural and socio-cultural factors over time" (Cornbleth, p26). In the unfolding history of ELP's curriculum development work, the biographical impulses were so intertwined with structural and socio-cultural factors, that even now it is hard for me to separate them out and assign relative importance. The ELP team were agents both limited and enabled by the historical and socio-political circumstances of the ABET field.

As a result, the ELP course is both a product of the ABET context and a tool to shape that context. It is a tool which values emancipation and seeks to provide the technical back-up needed for teachers to implement empowering activities in the classroom. Its intention is to be user-friendly for teachers, appropriate for learners and thus to generate a classroom environment convivial to English language and literacy learning.

This chapter has described the ELP course and the context which gave rise to it. In chapter 5 I will describe the ability of the Course to influence ABET classroom practice. The two chapters in-between explore the methodological and conceptual tools to make that description a rigorous one.

CHAPTER 3 Research Methodology: Illuminating the Interplay

3.1 Introduction

This chapter describes the means of travel on my research journey, the ideas and techniques that enabled me to venture forward from base camp. It outlines the methodological tools I found, the theorists and researchers who shaped my thinking about how to conduct educational research and analyse the information collected. It also illustrates the research process I went through, paying particular attention to the impact my presence had on the environment.

The question of this research report is essentially one of 'how?'. How does the ELP course fulfil its intention of being a convivial tool in the classroom? How are teachers making use of its methodology? How is the context shaping its use? And how does it come to be like that? So I needed to find a research methodology that would open up questions of 'how' in such a way that the answers would lead me to the underlying "why?'. I found that in ethnography.

3.2 The Research Paradigm

Paul Leedy's "Practical Research" (1985), has had a powerful effect on research methodology and presentation. His "Outline for the Research Report" (p234-5) has been followed by most of the M Ed theses I have looked at. And yet, my own research does not fulfil Leedy's "Criteria for a Research Report" (p83). He says the criteria for research are: Universality - meaning that it could have been carried out by any competent person; Replication - meaning that it should be repeatable and achieve comparable results; Control - meaning that the research is conducted within limited parameters; and Measurement, meaning that the data should be measurable. By contrast, my research is not universal - what I saw in the classrooms is very much a product of my own history and involvement in ABET; it is not replicable - other ABET researchers would report different findings and even if I went back to the classrooms now I would see different things because I have developed new

perspectives through this research process; it was controlled only in as far as I had a particular question which excluded some things from my gaze; and it is not measurable - the 'data' I offer in chapter 5 is purely descriptive.

Nevertheless, I offer it as valid research. Leedy is writing from within a positivist paradigm. I prefer to work within an ethnographic mindset. Greater academic minds than mine have fought the paradigm battle in favour of 'constructivist', 'naturalistic', 'ethnographic', 'qualitative' research over and against 'positivist', 'scientific', 'rationalistic', 'quantitative' research (Polanyi 1958, Bhola 1990, Geertz 1973, Giddens 1979, Wolcott 1988, Hamilton 1976, to name but a few) and I am content to ride on their shoulders.

Qualitative research seeks to uncover the complexities of real life, looks at people's intentions and the meanings they create in their natural contexts, uses open-ended research instruments and aims for insights into human endeavour, rather than generalizable, scientific laws. In the educational context, researchers with a quantitative paradigm assume that it is possible to find and then disseminate the correct way of teaching, while researchers within a qualitative paradigm are aware that whatever is seen as 'better' teaching depends on the purpose and the context.

3.3 The Purpose: Illumination

The inspiration for my research methodology came from Parlett and Hamilton. Their approach of 'Evaluation as Illumination' (P&H, 1976) enabled me to give shape to a non-judgmental purpose. They contend that the primary concern is with "description and interpretation" (p88) and that:

> The task is to provide a comprehensive understanding of the complex reality (or realities) surrounding the project: in short, to 'illuminate'. In his report, therefore, the evaluator aims to sharpen discussion, disentangle complexities, isolate the significant from the trivial, and raise the level of sophistication of debate (p99).

This approach does not oblige me to judge teachers as using the ELP materials correctly or incorrectly, but rather liberates me to describe the details of the interactions, to create new categories for seeing and hopefully to make a useful contribution to the debates about the use of course materials and teacher training in ABET. The enquiry into the ELP course thus becomes an illustrative case study to illuminate the elements that go into making convivial materials, to draw out methodological implications for teacher training, and to interpret

contextual influences in ABET. The aim of the enquiry is to shed new light onto ongoing debates in ABET.

Another useful construct from Parlett and Hamilton is their understanding of two concepts: the 'instructional system' and the 'learning milieu' (p89). The central assumption is that learning milieux are diverse and complex and that when an instructional system comes into use, it "undergoes modifications that are rarely trivial", assuming "a different form in every situation" (p89). This meant that modifications to the ELP Course (the instructional system) by the teachers in the different workplaces (the learning milieux), can be seen as creative and necessary adaptations, not merely as misunderstandings of the course writers' intentions. Parlett and Hamilton's assumption alerted me to look for the unexpected and be open-minded in my investigations.

Illuminative evaluation does not see itself as a standard methodological package, but as "a general research strategy (which) aims to be both adaptable and eclectic" (p92). There are three stages: "investigators observe, inquire further and then seek to explain" (p92). During the first stage, investigators become knowledgeable about the situation; during the second, their observations and questions are more focused, systematic and selective; during the third stage, they seek general principles, find patterns of cause and effect and place individual findings within a broader explanatory context (p93). The three stages are not distinct, but "overlap and functionally inter-relate" (p93). My research followed these stages roughly.

In terms of research techniques, Parlett and Hamilton suggest that "the problem defines the methods used (and that) no method is used exclusively or in isolation" (p92). They make use of observations, interviews, questionnaires, tests and documentary sources. They use "triangulation" to facilitate cross-checking of findings.

In terms of research methodology, I wanted something that would give me more support in how to conduct and write up the observations and interviews. It is not an easy thing to "provide sufficient information to illustrate the basis for my interpretation and to give readers an adequate basis for reaching independent interpretations of their own" (Wolcott, 1988, p219). To learn how to do that, I turned to the thick description of ethnography.

3.4 The Method: Thick Description

"Thick description," says Clifford Geertz (1973), is embedded in a concept of culture that sees "man as an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun" (p5). It is therefore not a description of the physical reality alone, but includes a search for the meaning, for the "explication" (p5) of what is observed. The researcher observes and notes human behaviours, always asking "what their import is" (p10). Thick description is intrinsically linked with interpretation: "what we call our data are really our own constructions of other people's constructions of what they and their compatriots are up to" (p9). The aim of thick description is to portray the situation in its "complex specificness", (p23) and thus enable the reader to gain "access to the conceptual world" in which other people live and "converse with them" (p24).

For my research, this meant that illuminating the interplay between teachers and materials in their contexts required me to understand the concepts that teachers have about materials. I also needed to be able to portray the teachers' perceptions and actions in such a way that readers can engage with and learn from them.

That led me to the question of objectivity in an ethnographic approach. If I view the teachers' constructions through the lens of my own constructions, then how will the reader know that I did not falsify the categories and conclusions drawn out of my descriptions? Geertz provides an interesting answer:

> Cultural theory is not its own master. As it is unseverable from the thick descriptions it presents, its freedom to shape itself in terms of its internal logic is rather limited. What generality it contrives to achieve grows out of the delicacies of its distinctions, not the sweep of its abstractions. (p25)

And how does one achieve these delicate distinctions? For Geertz it is a two-way process. The ethnographer's categories emerge in response to the research findings: "Conceptualisation is directed towards the task of generating interpretations of matters already in hand (p26). At the same time, the ethnographer approaches the task with some ideas already in mind: "One does not start intellectually empty-handed", but uses theoretical ideas "adopted from other, related studies" (p27). For my research this meant that whilst doing and interpreting the field work I could draw on what I already know in ABET as well as use the conceptual tools I found in the literature.

Harry Wolcott is an ethnographer who has researched educational issues. His case studies (The Evaluation of the TV Programme 'ThinkAbout' (1984), The Teacher as an Enemy (1987), Adequate Schools and Inadequate Education: The Life History of a Sneaky Kid (1988)) are stunning examples of how thick description can embed concepts and insights in such memorable stories that the reader will never forget them.

As an advocate of ethnography in education, Wolcott is concerned though, to "distinguish between anthropologically informed researchers who *do ethnography* and educational researchers who frequently *draw upon ethnographic approaches* in doing descriptive studies" (1988, p202). He insists that ethnography is not a collection of particular research techniques, but that the critical element is one of interpretation. Ethnographic interpretation looks at the cultural context, at behaviours and the meanings that underlie those behaviours.

> What is critical is to focus on classrooms and other educational settings as cultural scenes and on how the individuals directly or indirectly involved in those scenes make sense of and give meaning to what is going on. (1984, p179)

Nevertheless, techniques are valuable for getting at those meanings. Wolcott (1988), LeCompte & Goetz (1984), Delamont (1992) and others describe in detail how to do different kinds of interviews, participant observations and document collections. They also mention more systematic techniques such as questionnaires, surveys, pen and pencil tests. They emphasise the need for triangulation, of obtaining information in many ways and not relying on any one instrument alone to substantiate a conclusion. All this is very useful for someone entering the field of research, especially when they point out difficulties and things to watch out for.

In the end though, the central ethnographic research instrument is the researcher herself. As Wolcott says: "What better instrument could we ever devise for observing and understanding human behaviour?" (1988, p190). This puts the responsibility on the researcher to become more informed about the subject matter and to develop research skills, i.e. to become a more perceptive instrument.

There were three books that helped me become more perceptive. Ruth Wajnryb (1992) alerted me to look for issues particular to language teachers, such as how the teacher accommodates different learner levels, how her metalanguage fits the level of the lesson, what kinds of questions she is asking, how she gives feedback to students, her teaching strategies, classroom management, lesson pacing and other such issues. E.C. Wragg (1994) described a wide variety of observation instruments and approaches, listed what the observer

should keep in mind when planning observations, pointed out the importance of body language and provided suggestions for how to analyse transcripts, amongst many other useful ideas. Sara Delamont (1992) had the most impact on my thinking. Her down to earth advice on how to negotiate access, how to choose one's reading, how to observe and record data was most useful. But the main thing I gained from her was a fuller understanding of the role of the researcher in relation to the problem of validity. Delamont maintains:

> The researcher should not waste time trying to eliminate 'investigator effects', instead she should concentrate on understanding those effects. (p8) Each researcher is her own best data collection instrument, as long as she is constantly self-conscious about her role, her interactions, and her theoretical and empirical material as it accumulates. As long as qualitative researchers are reflexive, making all their processes explicit, then issues of reliability and validity are served. (p9)

This means that the influence of the observer on what is being observed can be transformed from a problem into an interesting contribution to the research. It becomes an aspect of the context in which the teachers interact with the materials. A reflexive observer can notice and open up behaviours arising from the "Hawthorne effect - the psychological effects that arise out of mere participation" (Cohen and Manion, 1994, p171) in a research situation.

So, armed with the conviction that qualitative research was legitimate, inspired by the possibility of shedding light on questions I was curious about, sensitised to looking at issues within their culture and context, and fortified by suggestions on how and what to look at, I ventured forth into the classrooms.

3.5 The Research Process

My research proposal had outlined visits to urban teachers trained by Continuing Education Programme (CEP) and rural teachers employed by the Rural Foundation. That would have given me the opportunity to look at different kinds of contexts: industrial settings with employed learners, some resources and relative stability versus community settings, with unemployed learners, few resources and minimal supporting structures. But I soon realised that would have extended the scope of this research project too broadly. Also, the Rural Foundation closed down in about March 1996, and although their literacy section was to continue under a different name, the disruptions caused by the closure made visiting far-flung rural classes too precarious.

3.5.1 Negotiating Access

The Continuing Education Programme (CEP) works with companies to set up literacy programmes at the workplace. They help put the overseeing committees in place, they train and offer ongoing support to the ABET teachers employed by the companies, and they provide the classes with teaching-learning materials. I asked CEP for the names of teachers who were using ELP materials in their classes. I wanted teachers who had had no contact with ELP previously, so that their responses to the materials were based on the books alone, not on prior attitudes they might have to the organisation.

CEP gave me a list of six names. One teacher was on maternity leave, the other five became the participants in this research. In effect, this amounted to an opportunity sample with only one criterion - were they using ELP materials? Variables such as gender, race, level of education, length of teaching experience or amount of ABET teacher training were not an issue. Common features were that all five were employed to teach, that they had learners who were employed, and that they worked in industrial settings.

Negotiating access was relatively easy. I talked directly with the teachers, and asked permission to attend about five consecutive lessons and conduct an interview. I explained that CEP had given me their name, that I had worked at ELP for years and was now studying for a masters degree and that I wanted to look at how the ELP books supported the teachers and how teachers adapted them for their circumstances. Three of the teachers suggested I speak to their manager first and write a letter explaining what I wanted. (See appendix 2 for an example of such a letter.) The managers had no problem with me coming. The other two teachers gave me permission in their own right. We then negotiated at what point it would be most appropriate for me to come.

On the 31st January 1996 I made the first phone-calls. Observations with each teacher started on the 19th February, 28th February, 11th March, 14th March and 6th May respectively. Most of the classes took place for two hours in the late afternoons, two or three times a week. One class happened full time for seven hours a day. The classes required some travelling - to Alrode, south east of Johannesburg, to Lanseria, north west of Johannesburg, to Rosslyn, north west of Pretoria, and to Marikana near Rustenburg.

The class I observed in May had start-up problems typical for ABET classes. When I phoned initially, the English 1 class was just coming to an end and we agreed I would come to see the

English 2 class due to start on the 12th February. By the 23rd March the class had not yet started because the books had not arrived. When I phoned on 1st April, the workers were out on a big march in support of a NUMSA (National Union of Metalworkers in South Africa) issue. Only at the end of April did the teacher phone to say that the class was now operating and I could come. ABET classes are a minor focus when compared to all the other activities of a workplace.

3.5.2 Research Techniques

During observations I took copious notes of what the teacher said and did in relation to the ELP workbooks and the learners, how learners responded to the teacher and reacted to the workbooks, what the classroom looked like, what was written in completed workbooks, even what happened during breaks. I was concerned to get as rich a description as possible. As my research question centred around whether or not the Course was a convivial tool, I wanted to record all the different ways in which the tool could be used or in which it was influential. I hoped to capture, in an open-minded way, all the significant detail of the interactions around the workbooks and the context in which those interactions happened, whether expected or unexpected.

Before or after lessons, I also interviewed each teacher, following a questionnaire guideline. (See appendix 4). These interviews sought to probe into teachers' conceptions: how they perceived the Course, how they understood its content and methodology, how they saw themselves using it. While the observations looked at the behaviours of the participants, the interviews tried to get at some of the meanings that participants ascribed to those behaviours.

While observing and interviewing, I took notes. As LeCompte and Goetz say: "Whichever means of recording data are chosen, researchers should select only what they can use well" (1984, p40). I did not use a tape recorder for the interviews, as I do not like talking into one. Also, the ABE world is not at the cutting edge of technology and using a tape recorder would have added a level of discomfort I did not want to deal with. I am sorry though, that I did not take photos. I took a camera once, but was so involved in the lesson that I forgot about it until after most of the learners had left.

"Triangulation may be defined as the use of two or more methods of data collection" (Cohen & Manion, p233). I triangulated with two main sources of information: the interviews and

the lesson observation transcripts. In three out of the five classes I had a chance to look through the students' workbooks, which provided a third source of information. But I did that only when it felt naturally appropriate, as I did not want to fall into the role of inspector.

3.5.3 The Effect of the Observer

I had read about the effect of the observer on what is being observed and during the research I became very aware of that reality. Two issues stand out for me most strongly: myself as a cultural outsider and teachers' perception of me as an evaluator[4].

I was most obviously a cultural outsider when observing the classes for mine workers at a training centre near Rustenburg. Everybody was ultra polite, was concerned for my well being and constantly offered me tea. In contrast to the other people at the training centre, I came from the big city, I was white and I was a woman. People were very surprised that I drove all the way from Johannesburg each day - 'Jo'burg' is on another planet compared to the dry, open veld surrounding the mine. My whiteness gave me status - racial integration on the mines is still in its infancy. Having a woman there was unusual too - the change room was converted into a women's toilet by hanging up a hand-written 'Ladies' sign. Being one woman among so many men, in particular men who live in hostels and don't have access to women, was a strange feeling - it made me very aware of being female and having to behave with propriety.

These factors combined to make me very prominent as an observer. Even though my introduction emphasised that I had come not to evaluate anyone but wanted to see how the books worked, the teacher and the learners never quite lost the sense of needing to perform. Throughout the three days of observation the teacher often referred to me in class: 'Isn't that so?' 'Don't you agree?' 'Ask her, she knows about the exams' 'Let us show our visitor here'. Privately he would ask me: 'I plan to do this, is that OK?' or 'What do you think I should do?'. The learners often tried to catch my eye for confirmation, or watched to see how I was reacting. Only by the third day did the discomfort slowly wear off. The teacher stopped calling me 'our visitor', or 'the lady here' and started calling me 'Carola'. Teacher and learners were still in performance mode, but at least they were relaxed about it.

[4] In this chapter I am dealing with issues of research methodology, not with observations in relation to my research question. The issues are general, not related to particular teachers. So it seemed to me that identifying the teachers was not pertinent.

In the mid-morning of the third day, the teacher arranged a photographic session, 'so we can remember the days we were together'. He organised photos of him being interviewed, of the whole class with me, of him and me alone, saying: 'Don't worry, I'll pay for it'.

At closing time on the last day, out of the blue, the teacher asked the learners to talk about "How you feel with our visitor here for three days?". They responded without hesitation:

> I feel happy. It is my first time to see a white woman to listen to someone like me. I'm happy very high, this white person travel very far. Some come for one hour or one day, but you come for three days. You show us that you like us, that you want us to learn, that's why you come for three days.

The last learner's comment took me by surprise: "I'm very happy. Return to see us. But I don't understand, why are you here?" I explained again, this time giving my personal motivation. They wanted to see my name in the ELP books. I showed them and they were satisfied. It had just been very strange for them to have someone so foreign be interested in their learning.

It seems my presence gave both teacher and learners recognition for what they were doing. I left feeling grateful that I had been able to give something in return for their generous acceptance of me.

The other issue was teachers' perception of me as an evaluator. In all my interactions I emphasised that I had come to see how the books work, not to evaluate their teaching. But two small incidents made me realise how teachers felt the need to enhance their performance because of my presence.

The first one occurred during the first lesson I watched. The teacher introduced me as a visitor, emphasising that the learners should not let my presence disturb them. Yet about halfway through the lesson, I became aware that the learners knew the answers to all the questions the teacher was asking. Only in the last 10 or 15 minutes of the lesson did the teacher actually introduce new words and ideas. By giving what amounted to a revision lesson, the teacher was showing off her learners (and thereby herself) to their best advantage. It did not help me though, in terms of wanting to see how teachers and learners grapple with the words and pictures on the pages in the books. Fortunately this consciousness of the observer wore off in subsequent lessons and I was able to see how that class dealt with new information presented by the book.

The next one took me a long time to notice. Another teacher followed what the book said word for word. This made the lessons feel quite energyless. Yet on the walls of her classroom there were several posters and charts illustrating creative extensions of previous lessons from the books. During the interview she made many insightful comments which indicated that she understood and owned the contents and teaching techniques of the books. I could not understand this discrepancy until, on re- and re-reading the transcripts, I understood that she was censoring herself. Previously (she mentioned in the interview) an evaluator had come to look at her teaching of another course and had criticised her for adding extra things to the methodology of that course. Now I was there, looking specifically at how she was using this course - and of course she was not going to expose herself to the same criticism again. I wrote to her explaining this insight, and the next time she spoke to me she said it was true, and she would have more confidence in relation to future observers.

Regarding the impact of the observer on learners, it was interesting to me that the class which seemed least aware of my presence was the one that welcomed me in the most explicit way. When I arrived, the teacher got the learners to ask me questions. Each learner asked a question - about my work, family, living conditions and reasons for coming. Their curiosity satisfied, they accepted me as another person in the class and got on with the business of learning. It seems that making the observer an explicit part of the situation might be an effective way of neutralising their disruptive effect.

There is another factor that can't be overlooked, namely, my behaviour. I wanted to be accepted in the class and had an impulse to offer something constructive to the situation. I was careful not to interfere or to impose my views, but I was a presence in the room. I became a participant observer: I chatted with teachers outside of the interview, I engaged with individual learners, I contributed to discussions in class.

Following Delamont, I offer these anecdotes as illustrations of how my presence shaped what happened in the classes I watched. In some cases more than in others, my presence did shift the normal patterns of interaction with the books, especially in initial lessons. Yet, as observations were spread over several lessons, I think that the basic patterns re-established themselves. Also, on thinking about and analysing the transcripts later, I came to recognise my influence and filtered it out of the observations recorded in chapter 5.

3.5.4 Ensuring Validity

At the end of the observation time, I was grateful that the teachers and several of the learners invited me to come again. I have not managed to do that yet, but have corresponded with the teachers.[5]

Because I had only taken notes, I was concerned to validate the accuracy of what I had written. I sent each teacher a full transcript of the interview and the lessons, asking for their comment. (See appendix 3). Their responses unanimously confirmed the accuracy of the work. One teacher said: "The transcripts were a fair reflection of the lessons. I found some things nicer than I remembered, I chuckled over other things and I found some things disconcerting. But there was nothing totally off track." Another teacher wrote: "It is good to have comments from an outsider. It really gives me a good reflection of what I am doing, so as to improve where necessary and to be able to know my strengths". Teachers did ask me to make a few changes though, like the spelling of learners' names, a change as to who had paid for the library books, the qualification that only some mineworkers are not educated, a misunderstanding during a discussion. Because the requested changes were so minor, they added to the validity of the transcripts as a whole.

I also sent them the first draft of chapters 3 and 5, so they could see and comment on how their work was used in relation to other teachers. When I phoned to check their response, all the teachers said they found the research findings interesting and positive.

I asked the teachers whether they wanted me to use their real names or a pseudonym. The tradition is for educational research to use pseudonyms. I personally think that the teachers deserve credit for the work they are doing. I left the choice up to them. Four said I could use their real names. One teacher was not sure, as she was worried about being criticised for something that she had maybe improved on in the meantime. After reading the first draft, she too agreed to the use of her real name.

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[5] Delamont talks about the importance of maintaining relationships in the field. I felt a need to say thank you to the teachers and learners in a practical way. So during the process of teachers giving me feedback, I gave them information about the IEB, UNISA, the availability of readers or whatever came up. For two of the classes, I transcribed what learners had said and printed it out in the form of reading material for the classroom. One was a debate about whether it was better to live in a hostel or a shack, while the other consisted of a few accident reports. Learners enjoyed reading their own words: "that's just what we said, it sounds like there was a tape recorder" their teacher told me on the phone.

I then gave the first draft of chapters 3 and 5 to three of my ABET colleagues. They were excited by the findings and said they rang true. They also made insightful comments about the implications of the findings, many of which I have used in chapter 6.

3.6 The Analysis: Learning from Action Research

After the observations, I was faced with about 200 typed pages of transcripts and comments. I felt confident about the technicalities of how to code my findings using a computer - but I was stumped by the question of what to code and, even more, how to interpret what my codings had selected. At that stage my supervisor offered me several readings and talked through ideas. The breakthrough in my ability to analyse what I had seen came after reading Richard Winter and his version of action research.

Let me emphasise that this research report is not action research. Action research is a "small-scale intervention in the functioning of the real world and a close examination of the effects of that intervention" (Cohen and Manion, p186). It is also usually collaborative, participatory and self-evaluative - characteristics which don't apply in this case. It is beyond the scope of this report to describe the different strands of action research and the conceptual and practical difficulties that it confronts.[6] What follows is merely what I learned from action research regarding the analysis of information brought back from the field.

My research shares action research's overarching aim to enable "the improvement of professional practice" (Winter, 1987, p90). Winter sees action research as providing a valuable way of integrating theory and practice. The action research cycle aims to unite increased understanding and knowledge with improvement in practice by linking them into an integrated cycle of activities - a 'spiralling' relationship between the analysis of practice and

[6] The main thing I don't understand about Winter's insistence on action-research is the practical issue of workload. Teaching and research are very different kinds of work that both take time and skill in their own right. For a teacher, research also requires the acquisition of new ideas, theories and techniques which take time to master. Winter tries to solve this dilemma by describing specific methods for analysis - which are in fact the very techniques I am making use of. But they are not easy techniques to learn and they don't solve the problem of needing time out from the action of teaching in order to engage in the action of research.

I think what underlies action research is the attempt to empower the teacher, to change the power relationship between researcher and teacher - and that is a worthwhile project.

the implementation of changed practices (1989, p13). For this analysis to be "valuable", Winters argues that "it must open up previously neglected possibilities" (1989, p33).
Winter suggests six principles to follow (1989, p38-67):

Reflexive critique: The idea is that whenever researchers comment or pass judgement on something, they are choosing a phenomenon that is significant in their own lives and are seeing it through the filter of their own issues. So instead of just making claims, they need to reflect and make explicit the values and theories that give rise to those claims. One way of doing this is to use questions instead of claims, thus allowing for a range of possible alternatives and promoting discussion where previously particular interpretations have been taken for granted.

Dialectical critique: One way to understand a phenomenon is to consider the relationships between the phenomenon and its context as well as the relationships between the elements that make up the phenomenon. Which contexts and elements researchers choose as relevant, is a matter of investigation and judgement. The significant things they look for in the relationships are contradictions and whatever tensions create the likelihood of change. So when looking at data, researchers focus on conflicting attitudes, on conflicting actions or on attitudes which are at variance with actions. They also focus on patterns of opposed forces which make up the history of the phenomenon and give it a specific tendency to change.

Collaborative resources: Winter makes the radical suggestion that the researcher's point of view is not the final word on what all the other points of view mean. Everybody's point of view is taken as a credible contribution towards understanding. This means researchers should avoid commentary which places them in the superior role of someone whose analysis of other people's words shows that they know what is going on while the others don't. Researchers are collaborators in the situation. The audience for the report includes those colleagues whose words and actions make up the report.[7] So the researchers' need to continue working with these colleagues afterwards acts as a break to lines of thought which are merely their own prior value judgements.

[7] With hindsight, I think the fact that the teachers needed to 'approve' what I had written was the single most effective means for ensuring the validity of my work. It made me write for them rather than about them. That in turn, made me reject my initial, superficial criticisms and instead look at deeper levels of interpretation of their behaviors. And that deeper look is what contributed to the transformation of the perspectives I started out with.

Risk: Researchers must put themselves at risk and open up their own capacity for change and fresh insight. It is not the ideas with which they started that are important, but the insights that emerge in the course of the inquiry.

Plural structure: The research report should contain a variety of voices and interpretations, not just that of the researcher. One way to achieve this is to make extracts from transcripts substantial enough to stand on their own rather than just selecting a few lines to illustrate the researcher's point.

Theory, practice, transformation: Because theory and practice are interdependent phases of the same process, both undergo change and transformation. The ideas and skills of all research participants should be different at the end of an action research cycle compared to when it began.

I tried to use these principles - commenting on my own bias, looking for contradictions and potential change, respecting all the different voices, opening myself to change, writing in such a way as to let other voices be heard, as well as letting theory and practice influence each other - in my analysis of the transcripts contained in chapter 5.

3.7 In Conclusion

The methodological concepts of ethnography and allied perspectives on research that informed my approach and that I referred to during and after my fieldwork were the following:

- examples of insightful thick description,
- that behaviour is interpreted in its social context,
- reflexivity about the influence of the observer and the researcher's filter during analysis,
- analysis that respects all the different voices and is yet not afraid to point out contradictions,
- choosing and illuminating phenomenon for their potential to contribute to debates around the improvement of professional practice.

The readings in this chapter honed my research skills. The next chapter outlines the readings that honed my thinking skills.

Chapter 4 Literature Review: Literacy as Social Practice

4.1 Introduction

This chapter describes the 'equipment' used to prepare for and take with me on the fiield trip. It outlines the readings that provided conceptual tools with which to see relationships more clearly and understand what I was seeing more fully. The conceptual tools helped me to organise my experiences on the field trip and structured my insights towards the end of the research journey.

The chapter describes the readings in some detail - it took me time to become familiar with the 'equipment' and learn how to use it. There are two sets of readings. The first set helped me to look back in time at ELP's curriculum development work and re-appraise what we had done from a more theoretical perspective. The readings helped clarify the conception of curriculum we were working with. The second set took me forward into the realm of the research fieldwork. The readings address themselves to the relationship between teachers and texts and the elements that are necessary for it to be a productive relationship in the classrooms. They also contribute to and expand the notion of conviviality as applied to teaching-learning materials.[8]

Literacy for Knowledge and Power was ELP's slogan for many years. It reflected our conception of what literacy and basic education should achieve: empowering learners and providing them with the skills to participate in transformation, whether personal or societal. In my reading for this chapter, I looked for texts that would help me refine and expand this perspective. I did not seek to challenge my basic position nor to engage in argument with people who come from a completely different perspective.

[8] In this chapter there are many terms to indicate curriculum materials for classroom use. I have used 'text' or 'teaching-learning materials' as generic terms. 'Textbook' and 'course materials' are used interchangeably, depending on the form of the text in that particular situation. A 'textbook' is one book and carries the implication of being prescribed by the education authorities. 'Course materials' can consist of several books, posters, readers or flash cards. 'Course' is usually short for 'course materials', while 'workbook' indicates a course-book or textbook in a particular format which allows learners to write in it.

4.2 A Conception of Curriculum

4.2.1 The Definition of Literacy - a Debate

In the field of adult literacy there has been a long-standing debate between people who see the ability to read and write as a neutral skill, acquiring which is a value in itself, and people who see literacy as a social tool that should be used for personal empowerment and social transformation. As was said at a conference to celebrate International Literacy Year:

> The concepts of literacy .. vary widely from seeing it as a mere technical skill to be acquired by people as a pre-requisite for their growth and development to seeing it as a means of empowering people, in using one's own language for gaining power to take control over one's life situations. In other words, it varies from literacy being the goal or an end in itself to literacy being the tool to gain power to have control over situations that affect their lives.
> (Saraswathi, 1990, p60)

The debate between these perspectives rages whenever practitioners meet and justify to each other their choice of teaching methodology and content for literacy curricula. It pitches moral and political arguments against technical ones, as though there is no possibility of understanding across the divide.

There is also a deeper problem, namely the existence of that divide within individual practitioners. When talking about literacy, we talk about an empowering tool. When teaching literacy to learners who laboriously write the same words and sentences over and over again, it becomes a skill that has simply to be mastered.

So it was interesting to read Shirley Grundy, who places this conflict between technical skill and emancipatory intentions within a larger philosophical understanding of different paradigms for thinking about the nature of knowledge.

4.2.2 Three Conceptions of Curriculum - Shirley Grundy

Grundy draws on Habermas' theory of "knowledge-constitutive interests" in her attempt to understand the premises on which curricula are constructed (1987, p7). For Habermas, the technical, the practical and the emancipatory knowledge constitutive interests are three fundamental, rational orientations of the human species (p9). Grundy takes these fundamental

orientations and explores what they mean for ways of thinking about and acting on curriculum issues.

I will briefly summarise Grundy's description of how the technical, practical and emancipatory knowledge constitutive interests shape curriculum practices before I offer my critique of the implications she arrives at. I will describe each paradigm in terms of its conception of knowledge, its mode of action and the social structures which it supposes. At the risk of some oversimplification, my summary contains only enough detail for the discussion purposes of this chapter.

People working with a *technical interest* see knowledge in terms of ideas that can be used. Ideas come from the outside and are treated as a plan which the teacher implements, i.e. modifies, adapts or applies in different situations. Theory is used prescriptively to direct, confirm and legitimise practice. What is valued is skill knowledge - knowledge of how to do things better. The intention is for knowledge to result in efficient, effective and productive action. Action is focused on improving the work output of the students. A technical interest is product centred. Whether or not the goal has been achieved is judged by the quality of the end product. Both the teacher and the students need to develop their skills so as to reach standards of excellence. Measurement is an important factor and provides the basis on which improvement is judged to have occurred. The technical interest is concerned with control, with gaining control over the teaching situation so that people can produce what they set out to produce. People working in a technical mode are usually embedded in hierarchical relationships, subject to supervision by others. The authority figures are seen to have access to the true ideas and they judge the effectiveness of the implementation further down the line (Chapter 3, p41-57).

People working on curriculum from within a *practical interest* will work with theory as something that provides proposals rather than prescriptions for action. They see it as important to develop understanding, to look at why and how something works, to value their implicit theory and make it explicit through reading and reflection. Knowledge grows with reflective deliberation and is embedded in the practitioner's understanding of the meaning of the situation. It leads to action that is concerned with meaning-making, with the purpose of the activity. Action in a practical mode is concerned to promote the meaningfulness of the learning experience for the students, working on the assumption that a meaningful process will result in worthwhile outcomes. Teachers working in a practical mode are concerned with the general good of the students and are prepared to question their practice, looking beneath the product to the well-being of the students. When doing research, they will tend to focus their attention on

improving their own practice rather than student products. The practical interest is concerned with judgement, with the personal, deliberate judgement of the practitioner in the situation. It respects teachers as professionals capable of making prudent judgements about curriculum matters. This encourages a greater degree of control by practitioners, with more opportunities for decision-making (Chapter 5, p79-98).

People working within an *emancipatory interest* see knowledge as a social construction, something that is made and can be changed by humans. Knowledge is thus always subject to critique. Instilling a critical consciousness towards knowledge and society is most important, as well as opening up the social construction and selection of curriculum content. The curriculum needs to be negotiated between teacher and learners in a relationship of equality. The driving principle of the emancipatory interest is liberation. Action is always guided by the central question: is liberation being served by this? Action follows on from theoretical as well as practical reflection in a continuous cycle of "praxis". As emancipation is envisioned as a social reality, not an individual achievement, teachers doing research guided by an emancipatory interest tend to direct their attention towards educational structures framing curriculum work. The emancipatory interest places a high value on collaborative work and on the equality experienced by members of a learning or working group. The ideal is for participants to be in control of the situation, rather than the control of their actions coming from elsewhere. This implies that outsiders do not have the criteria to evaluate the emancipatory nature of the learning. Emancipatory ideals create a whole new range of practical challenges regarding the appropriateness of actions, evaluation criteria or curriculum content. People working within an emancipatory paradigm need to come together in "critical communities" where they can reflect, negotiate and establish consensus about the different meanings of critical practice (Chapters 6&7, p99-140).

I find this description of the different paradigms a useful tool for understanding the ways of thinking that underlie approaches to curriculum, but I disagree with the relative value Grundy assigns to each. Grundy argues that "the emancipatory interest is most entirely consistent with the human condition" (p141). She sees critical pedagogy, which places control of knowledge with the learning group, as "inherently liberating" (p104). By contrast, a technical interest, "through its interest in control, automatically denies emancipation" (p159). She also says that the technical and practical interests are "reasonably mutually exclusive", and that the emancipatory interest is "largely incompatible with the technical interest, but it is compatible with a practical interest" (p99).

My frustration with this argument is that Grundy overvalues the emancipatory and undervalues the technical interest. Habermas himself says that the problem with the technical interest is not that it is wrong, but that it has gained priority (Craib, 1984). I think that all three interests are simultaneously valid, and ideally, educators should be able to move between and combine them as appropriate. Giving priority to the emancipatory interest as Grundy does, simply creates a problem in the opposite direction. Advocating an emancipatory interest for curriculum work might be understandable in terms of her historical context as an educator in a technically oriented first world education system, but outside of that context it is, in my view, not a sound proposal. Let me illustrate by using examples from ELP's pedagogical past.

4.2.3 ELP's Experience with the Emancipatory Interest

Inspired by Freire, ELP in its early years took very seriously both the development of critical consciousness and the need for a negotiated curriculum. We tried many approaches to make these ideas work in the classroom.

To develop critical consciousness, learning groups had discussions in English and in mother-tongue, in response to pictures, texts, teacher questions, student enquiry or the "burning issues" of the day. But no matter how interesting or illuminating the discussions were, learners tended to view them as 'not the real thing'. For them, learning meant reading and writing and developing hard skills. Even worse, occasional attempts at consciousness raising around, for example, advertising, the tax system, the workings of capitalism or low wages, led groups into general suspicion and depression rather than to understanding and empowerment. Also, it was a problem if learners spent years coming to classes, learned all about the politics of the day, but never acquired much skill in English reading and writing. Critical consciousness, if it is not grounded in skill and knowledge, becomes hollow jargon.

Negotiating the curriculum was another minefield. Learners (even some teachers) were not able to articulate what and how they wanted to learn beyond the broadest generalisations. Common requests were for 'English', 'reading', 'forms', 'arithmetic' or 'school'. Teachers had neither the time nor the skills to create materials and learning programmes for particular groups of learners. Negotiated curricula only too often ended up with a floundering teacher and dwindling attendance in class.

ELP decided that a curriculum in the form of workbooks for use in the classroom was essential to give direction and coherence to the learning. Determined not to give up on some form of curriculum negotiation, we opted for what Grundy calls 'pseudo-sharing of power, [where] student decision-making operates only at the level of choice within options' (p123). ELP produced its course in a modular format, so groups could have some control over which book could be done next or which books could be left out. But even that limited choice is now being eroded by exam pressures (as mentioned in chapter 2) and is difficult to implement in class, (as will be described in Chapter 5).

What these examples have tried to illustrate is that an emancipatory orientation to curriculum work cannot be successful unless it is backed up by the skill and knowledge prized by the technical orientation as well by the confidence and deliberative judgement prized by the practical orientation.

Emancipation is the purpose of all education. That can easily get forgotten when curriculum work is totally immersed in the improvement and evaluation of skills or in the development of professionalization. So it is the responsibility of people working with an emancipatory orientation to remind educators that freedom, equality, justice and empowerment are the yardsticks by which curriculum work is ultimately measured. But along the way, teachers and learners need to gain knowledge, develop skills and generate the confidence to make practical judgements. For that to happen, the technical and practical orientations need to be embraced into the emancipatory one.

I now turn to some readings that gave me new ways of thinking about how one might do this, starting with MacIntyre's conception of a "practice", and Jean Lave's conception of learning as situated in "communities of practice".

4.2.4 Learning in a Community of Practice - MacIntyre and Jean Lave

MacIntyre defines a practice as

> any coherent and complex form of socially established co-operative human activity through which goods internal to that activity are realised in the course of trying to achieve those standards of excellence which are appropriate to, and partially definitive of, that form of activity, with the result that human powers to achieve excellence, and human conceptions of the ends and goods involved, are systematically extended.
> (MacIntyre, 1981, p175)

He gives chess, football, architecture, farming, painting and medicine as examples of practices. Each practice has "goods internal to the practice" (p175) which can only be gained by participating in the practice, for example, the goods internal to medicine lie in the power of healing. Each practice has its own historically developing tradition of skill and "we cannot be initiated into a practice without accepting the authority of the best standards reached so far (p177). Newcomers entering a practice need to accept the authority of these standards of excellence. They might be critical of the current standards in the practice, yet in the striving for excellence they hope to achieve ever-improved internal goods, resulting in benefits "for the whole community who participate in the practice" (p178).

Practices also offer 'external goods' - money and status for successful practitioners. They do that through institutions that develop to maintain a practice over time. Practices are vulnerable to the competitiveness generated by these institutions. So MacIntyre argues that for practices to survive, the people involved need to behave ethically. "We have to accept as necessary components of any practice with internal goods and standards of excellence the virtues of justice, courage and honesty" (p178). He then illustrates how these virtues are essential qualities in the interaction between people in the practice, without which there can be no trust in the authority nor respect for the standards of the practice.

Participating in a practice involves living the life of a practitioner - being a painter, an educator or a healer. It means becoming a particular type of person, allowing a shift in identity. This link between learning and changing identity is what Jean Lave is interested in when she talks about "legitimate peripheral participation" (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p34) in a community of practice.

Lave uses the concept of 'legitimate peripheral participation' as a way of describing how learning is integral to engagement in a social practice. A person who embarks on learning about a particular field of knowledge is engaging in legitimate peripheral participation. Legitimate,

because one has agreed to belong and to learn. Peripheral, because there are multiple possibilities of involvement and it takes time before an individual grows to full participation, at which point a large part of their personal identity is linked to the practice. Participation, because one gains access to understanding through growing involvement.

Lave turns upside down our common sense notion of learning as something that individuals do on their own, inside themselves. Learning is a social activity, an initiation into and journey through a social practice. "Learning ... implies becoming able to be involved in new activities, to perform new tasks and functions, to master new understandings" (p53). Learning thus means becoming a new kind of person with an expanding repertoire of skill.

Learning also means changing one's position in a practice, shifting one's relationship with the other people in it. One can't be a learner without being in a practice. And, as practices are constantly changing and evolving, one can't be in a practice without learning. "Developing an identity as a member of a community and becoming knowledgeably skilful are part of the same process, with the former motivating, shaping and giving meaning to the latter, which it subsumes" (Lave, 1993, p65).

Practices wouldn't survive without people who are learning participants in that practice. A range of relationships are possible: newcomers listen to what the old-timers have to say, they watch and copy the skills of relative old-timers, or they support each other in their learning. The relationships can be conflictual: as relative old-timers strive to advance, they tend to replace the old-timers and if old-timers want to maintain their position they might do that by not sharing their knowledge. In these struggles over shifting positions, the knowledge and skill particular to that practice is changed and transformed. This makes for a much more complex picture of learning and teaching than the traditional view of a teacher transferring knowledge and a student assimilating it.

When I first came across MacIntyre and Lave's ideas, I related them to ABET as a whole. They enabled me to see ABET as a social practice, as a dynamic tradition within which newcomers, relative old-timers and old-timers teach, develop materials, organise adult classes or do policy work, interacting and learning from each other to gradually extend the definition of what is involved in the practice. The internal goods of the practice seem to me to lie in the satisfaction of enabling adults to learn, read and write successfully. The learning and shifts in identity happen as one changes roles, from teacher to trainer, or from NGO to government employee for example, or as the practice expands and advances in its definition of itself.

Then that view was expanded by Stierer and Maybin's introductory reference to language, literacy and learning as "social practices" (Stierer & Maybin, 1994, p ix). It enabled me to see literacy, i.e. the activity of reading and writing per se, as a social practice - and that opened a range of implications for understanding the relationship between skill and emancipation.

4.2.5 Literacy as Social Practice - Barry Stierer and Janet Maybin

"From anthropology and cultural studies a perspective has emerged which casts these processes (i.e. language, literacy and learning) as social practices, embedded in the cultural fabric of everyday communication and dependent for their meanings on the negotiation of identity", Stierer and Maybin say in their introduction (1994, p ix). This sentence caught my attention and my supervisor helped me make the link to Lave and MacIntyre. Using their conception of a practice and the integral role of learning within it has powerful implications for viewing literacy as a social practice:

- There is a tradition of skill that newcomers need to master, so as to become knowledgeable skilled - i.e. for illiterate or semi-literate adults there is a technical component to acquiring literacy skills.
- There is an internal good to be gained from participation in the practice - i.e. literacy has inherent value in and of itself.
- The learning happens in a social context, in fact, it derives its meaning from that context - i.e. literacy skills cannot be separated from the uses to which they are put.
- Embarking on the practice involves the whole person, their self-perception and identity - i.e. learners' hopes and fears and aspirations are brought into the classroom.
- Persisting in the practice involves a shift in identity, a gradually increasing authority in the tasks and roles that can be taken on in relation to other people - i.e. the activities of reading and writing can lead to a variety of roles both inside and outside the classroom.
- Without an ethical dimension, the practice becomes corrupt and untrustworthy - i.e. the uses to which one puts literacy, the content of the texts, the activities involved in learning literacy, all need to be saturated with justice, honesty and courage.

These implications effectively bridge the great divide between technical and emancipatory interests. Seeing literacy as social practice acknowledges the element of skill while demanding an adherence to ethics and liberation. It also works with the practical interest, encouraging changes of identity and the ability to make judgements in a literate world.

I then looked at how thinkers in the adult literacy world dealt with these issues and was drawn to the work of two men at opposite ends of the spectrum regarding the kind of work they are doing: Brian Street, a researcher and theorist, and H.S. Bhola, a planner, implementer and master teacher.

4.2.6 Literacy Practices - Brian Street

I expected to find myself in opposition to Brian Street's ideas. The impression I got from the way his work is talked about and used, is that he is disdainful of the efforts put into literacy teaching and what can be achieved by people becoming literate. To my surprise, I found myself agreeing with Street's basic premise (although his tone, when talking about the work of people he disagrees with, is often disdainful) and found the ethnographic studies of different literacy practices totally fascinating. Street views literacy as a social practice. His work focuses on cross cultural studies of how literacy is used and is not concerned with literacy acquisition. He looks at "literacy practices" - what people do with literacy and what ideas underpin that literate behaviour (Street, 1992, p45).

Street sets up two ways of thinking about literacy, the "autonomous" and the "ideological" models (1993, p5-10). These models repeat, in different terminology, the skill versus emancipation divide I have been concerned with above.

> The exponents of an 'autonomous' model of literacy conceptualise literacy in technical terms, treating it as independent of social context, an autonomous variable whose consequences for society and cognition can be derived from its intrinsic character" (p5). By contrast, the researchers working with an 'ideological' model, "have come to view literacy practices as inextricably linked to cultural and power structures in society, and to recognise the variety of cultural practices associated with reading and writing in different contexts (p7).

Unlike Grundy, he does not set up an incompatibility between these models.

> The 'ideological' model does not attempt to deny technical skill or the cognitive aspects of reading and writing, but rather understands them as they are encapsulated within cultural wholes and within structures of power. In that sense the 'ideological' model subsumes rather than excludes the work undertaken within the 'autonomous' model (p9).

What more can I say? It seems to me that Street is eloquently expressing the same idea that I advanced in my argument against Grundy earlier.

Street also emphasises the notion that a person's identity is bound up with the nature of the literacy practices they engage in. Literacy activities are embedded in a social situation and "when you get involved in a particular set of literacy practices you are taking on board with them the concepts of personhood associated with that particular set of practices" (1992, p49).

Of all the ethnographic studies in Street's collection (1993), one struck me particularly forcefully: Gail Weinstein-Shr's investigation of how Hmong refugees from Laos acquired and used English literacy skills to survive and make a life for themselves in the USA. She first worked as an ESL \ literacy teacher and later lived with and observed the literacy practices of two men in particular. One used his English literacy skills to integrate into American society: he was a 'good' student in class, and used his growing skills to navigate through the social services bureaucracy and act as broker for other refugees. The other used his new skills to maintain the traditional culture: he was a 'hopeless' student, but learned enough to read the newspaper and used that skill to be a centre for historical and current news about Laos and keep lists of all his clan members in the USA. The latter was a highly respected Hmong leader, while the former eventually left Philadelphia "in despair of his social isolation" (1993, p291). Literacy practices are linked to a person's identity, yet they are no guarantee, or even an indicator, of a person's success in life.

As a practitioner, I inevitably come back to the question: what are the implications of these findings for literacy practitioners and curriculum? Weinstein-Shr argues that: "By discovering the meanings and uses of literacy for members of diverse cultural communities, anthropologists can help educational planners take into account what adults want literacy to do for them" (1993, p291). Street makes a similar point: "most people, wherever they are located, have had some acquaintance with literacy practices and it may be better pedagogy, as well as more ideologically sound, to build on what they have rather than to ignore or debase it" (1990, p34).

This is sound advice to teachers and curriculum developers. In fact, it provided the inspiration for the research into the 'Social Uses of Literacy' recently undertaken in the Western Cape. Already that research is giving rise to interesting recommendations with regard to literacy within the framework of the NQF: "It may be more productive to think of initial literacy learning for adults as orientated towards extending and consolidating their everyday practices rather than orientating them towards schooling" (Kell, 1996, p25). I find this recommendation interesting, because ELP's main inspiration was to create a course that drew on learners' lives and provided life skills. But with the policy developments to create an ABET system equivalent

to schooling, the concept of life skills was attacked quite strongly as "ghettoising" learners and depriving them of the formal skills necessary for access to mainstream schooling.

In that light, I want to look at what H.S. Bhola says about literacy curricula content and development.

4.2.7 Literacy Curriculum Development - H.S. Bhola

Bhola is a guru, a man able to apply his wide range of knowledge and wisdom to particular situations. His writing style can be deceptively simple, accessible to rural literacy teachers and convincingly insightful for UNESCO policy makers. His life's work has been dedicated to enabling access to literacy for people all over the world.

Bhola enters the debate about different conceptions of curriculum from a practical angle: for curriculum development and teaching purposes, it is important how one defines literacy, because that definition will determine what and how literacy is taught. For example, a definition of literacy as social practice will lead to a completely different curriculum compared to a definition of literacy as technical skill only. He argues that to develop a universal and standard definition of literacy is "an impossible task" (Bhola, 1994, p28). He describes a whole range of definitions as they have developed over the last decades. Reading through the definitions, I notice that all of them are relative with regard to level of skill. It is impossible to say: a literate person can do xyz, for what counts as "effective functioning" (p29) in literate activities (or, to use Street's term, in literacy practices) differs across history and communities. All of the definitions vary greatly in terms of the purposes and subject matter they propose - be they cultural, political, civic, functional or critical. Seen historically, it seems to me that people try to either challenge earlier definitions by proposing a new paradigm (e.g. critical literacy challenging functional literacy in the 1970s) or to expand the definition while incorporating earlier ones (e.g. literacy as basic education incorporating both functional and critical literacy in the 1990s).

Bhola concludes that because definitions differ "in their mixes of skills and subject matter depending upon their needs and values", it is crucial that "each literacy project, programme or campaign needs to come up with its own particular definition of literacy in its particular setting" (p34).

In a later chapter, Bhola talks about the different components that need to be integrated in, for example, a functional, mother tongue, basic literacy course. The first component consists of skills: reading, writing and numeracy up to a sustainable level, so that the skills can be retained after the course (cf. Grundy's technical paradigm). The second component is an expanded conception of functionality: knowledge and skills of production that can be applied to generate income in rural or urban settings, the science on which these economic skills are based, as well as management skills, socio-political skills to ensure full participation in community life, life skills to take care of the family and the environment, cultural and spiritual development as desired (cf. Grundy's practical paradigm). The third component is awareness: about civic rights and responsibilities, race relations, peace, media control, women's issues, environment and whatever else are issues in that society (cf. Grundy's emancipatory paradigm).

This is a huge amount of content for a literacy course. Before selecting and prioritising, curriculum planners need to do an assessment of learners' needs, which "involves going to the learners themselves and asking them about their needs" (p62). Then they need to sequence and integrate the different components.

I found Bhola's reflections on the integration of the literacy curriculum refreshingly realistic. "Integration is not easy to achieve. In fact, it is much easier said than done", (p63) he maintains. This happens because of a logical clash. "This is the logical clash between on the one hand the logic and therefore the sequence of language teaching, and on the other hand the logic and therefore the sequence of subject matter of functionality and awareness" (p63). The logic of each component must be respected, and because they are not the same, integration becomes difficult.

He thus suggests two different forms of integration. In the first phase, when people are learning to read, the integration should be achieved through programme organization. That means literacy, functionality and awareness are taught as two or three separate streams. "But integration is achieved by teaching all this material to the same group of learners. The literacy teacher, the political education teacher and the extension worker teach as a team" (p64). In the second phase, when people are reading to learn, the integration should be thematic and can be contained in the learning materials, so that learners "use their skills in the 3-Rs in learning economic functionality and issues of awareness" (p64).

Bhola's approach to curriculum development calls for a conscious integration of the skills and content required in all three knowledge-constitutive interests. First curriculum developers need

to isolate what is needed for each paradigm: which technical skills, which knowledge and skills to underpin practical judgements, which subjects to ask critical questions about. Then they work on the logical development of the subject matter in each paradigm, and later they integrate and sequence the different knowledges appropriately for the particular learners they want to reach.

It could be argued that simply talking about curriculum developers means one is working within a technical paradigm and that the lack of ongoing curriculum negotiation with learners implied by a set of materials makes nonsense of the claim to be emancipatory. But as illustrated by the ELP experience earlier, creating an emancipatory curriculum requires more than negotiation with learners - it requires careful preparation and intensive discussion about what emancipation actually means in each particular learning situation. An approach to curriculum that intends to be emancipatory cannot avoid providing learners with skills or doing so in a skilful way.

4.2.8 ELP's Conception of Curriculum

I outlined Bhola's ideas on literacy curriculum development at some length because they speak so immediately to the dilemmas and decisions ELP faced when we determined the skills and prioritised the subject matter for *The ELP English Literacy Course for Adults*. In trying to sequence the course, we hit precisely the logical clash that Bhola talks of. The initial plan consisted of 50 topic areas, which included women's issues, contracts and legal documents, the geography of the world, i.e. topics drawn from the realms of awareness-raising, everyday functionality and general education. But the limited English language and literacy skills of learners put a lot of those topics out of reach. We had to accept that this course was limited to the phase of 'learning to read' (and speak in an additional language). As mentioned in chapter 2, we ended up with 16 (plus 6 for numeracy) workbooks.

The focus on functional life skills was frequently criticised over the years. Some people said it was not radical enough; did not show learners how to critique institutions. Others said it was not academic enough; did not give learners the introduction to content needed for formal schooling. Others said it was too urban and not practical enough; did not provide learners with income generating skills. These criticisms are indicative of the wide-ranging expectations that people have of literacy courses.

Nevertheless, ELP thinks that taking life skills as the subject matter for teaching English and literacy skills created a workable compromise. Life skills make use of simple, everyday language and literacy which suits the level and interest of beginner learners, while at the same time opening up personal and social issues for critical scrutiny. By integrating language, literacy, life skills and issues of awareness, the ELP course gives physical expression to the concept of literacy and language as social practices.

4.2.9 Concluding Comment

This concludes the first set of readings of chapter 4. They develop the argument that a conception of literacy as social practice enables an approach to literacy curriculum development which consciously includes elements from the technical, the practical and the emancipatory paradigms. Because language and literacy are embedded in the pursuit of other personal and social ends, the technical skills required for the achievement of those ends need to be taught and mastered. Because learning new skills leads to a shift in identity, reflection and practical judgements need to be encouraged. Because judgements have consequences for others as well as for oneself, an ethical dimension imbued with the value of emancipation needs to be fostered. The debate between literacy as a neutral skill and literacy as a tool for empowerment is synthesised by the conception of literacy as a social practice.

This leads to an expanded notion of course materials as a convivial tool. Eisner's criteria were all focused on the effects that convivial course materials need to achieve - providing options within structure, allowing different voices, fostering competence. What the above readings have highlighted is an additional curriculum criterion that literacy materials need to meet - which is creating a synthesis of the technical, practical and emancipatory paradigms by laying the basis for skill acquisition, enabling transfer of those skills into the social realm to support decision making, and raising awareness of ethical and emancipatory dimensions.

The second set of readings in this chapter look at the relationship between teachers and curriculum materials in the classroom. Having understood more clearly the curriculum framework that the ELP materials come out of, it is now time to gather conceptual tools for understanding more deeply what the research observations will make visible.

4.3 Teachers and Texts

> If you want to bring about significant change in an educational programme or system, simply change the materials with which teachers and learners work.
> (Edgar Dale, quoted in Bhola, p99)

> Research was conducted in Nigeria and led to the recognition that the effectiveness of programmed materials was ultimately a function of the teacher's confidence in the method and the administrative stability of the receiving school than upon any inherent qualities of the materials themselves.
> (Hamilton, 1976, p57)

These seemingly contradictory statements raise the question of how much power is vested in teaching-learning materials relative to teachers and context. In my opinion this is not a question that can be answered by choosing either one or the other position or by assigning proportional values, but rather a question to be explored by looking at the detail of the interaction between teachers, texts and contexts. Teachers and texts are the two primary sources of information that learners have access to in the classroom and so the interaction between these two sources will have a powerful influence on what and how learners learn.

I would like to use Lave's conception of learning in a practice to make a few comments on the relative roles assumed by teachers and teaching-learning texts. By its very nature, a textbook sets itself up as an authority in a practice, (which could be geography, literacy or any other body of knowledge). It is saying in effect: I represent the expert old-timers in this practice, who have an overview of what the important features of this practice are, and who have selected the knowledge and skills that it is important for you as learners and newcomers to acquire. (Whether or not other practitioners or the public at large agree with the selection is another matter.) Teachers, on the other hand, are relative old-timers in a practice. They have been students in the practice and have developed their own skills, but only seldom have they progressed far enough in the practice to be considered experts. They tend to rely on the textbooks for guidance. At the same time, in the classroom situation the teacher is the authority in relation to the learners, and the teacher decides when and how to use the textbook.

The relationship between old-timers and relative old-timers is a complicated one. It can be co-operative, conflictual or anything in-between. As Apple (1991) says, textbooks can both "de-power and em-power at different moments" (p9) and:

> Historically, teachers struggled both for and against the standardised text. Faced with large classes, difficult working conditions, insufficient training, and - even more important - little time to prepare lessons for the vast array of subjects and students they

were responsible for, teachers often looked upon texts not necessarily as impositions but as essential tools (p8).

4. 3.1 Some Research into Teachers and Texts

Framed by this conception of complex interrelationship, I want to describe some research studies from South Africa, Mozambique and the USA. I am drawing on research done in schools and in adult education classes. Although they are different contexts, some of the lessons can usefully be transferred from one field of education to the other.

4.3.1.1 South Africa - D.P. Langhan

Research into South African primary schools shows that teachers rely heavily on textbooks to guide their work (Langhan, 1992; Taitz, 1992; Macdonald, 1991). This reliance is fostered by several factors in the structural context, like the inadequate pre-service teacher training, the lack of ongoing in-service support, the faceless process of textbook selection, and the insecurities generated by using English as a medium of instruction in a situation where the children know only a little English.

D.P. Langhan's research found that textbooks were being relied on to guide the learning programme. He looked specifically at the geography texts for Std 3 primary school children, as this was the first year in which black schools used English as a medium of instruction and children were faced with learning the contents of a subject in a language they barely knew.

Initially Langhan wanted to know how the children interacted with the textbooks. He soon found out that the children never even received the texts, because teachers decided "for pupils to try to use textbooks that they could not read, was a waste of teaching time, and proved to be frustrating" (p94). But the teachers themselves relied "heavily on the textbook as their source of information" (p98) and saw their task as one of mediating the texts to the children.

Langhan then focused his research on the teachers. He interviewed teachers about the textbooks, checked their comprehension of selected passages, observed them teach from the textbooks, and analysed the quality of writing in the texts. He found that the texts did not take into account an audience of second language speakers - they used abstract vocabulary

and convoluted sentence structures, did not sequence the texts logically or coherently, and introduced new concepts without explanation. As a result, even teachers did not understand the geographic concepts and maps.

This lack of understanding had a profound influence on classroom practice. The main teaching techniques used were teachers lecturing in mother-tongue and then dictating notes in English which they had copied or summarised from the textbooks, and pupils rote-learning those notes so they could reproduce them in a test (p97). Langhan concluded that rote learning might be an inevitable response to poor texts, and suggested "textbooks that are above the competence level of the users 'impose' the rote learning style" (p3).

This problem is not confined to geography. Lynette Taitz (1992, p70), observing primary school classes across a range of subjects, found textbooks which contained explanations that were difficult to follow, paragraph that were incorrectly constructed and sometimes even distorted facts.

In terms of the metaphor in this chapter, which views textbooks as representative of old-timers, these textbooks do not fulfil their responsibility as authorities in the practice because they ignore the nature and context of their learners. Taking content knowledge for granted, they do not speak to the existing background knowledge of the pupils. Taking English vocabulary and sentence structure for granted, they do not keep in mind the needs of second language speakers. Unaware of the classroom realities, they suggest a pedagogy that is unrealisable.

Langhan argued, "since the pupils cannot and do not read the textbooks intended for them, they are entirely dependent on their teachers for what they learn. If the teacher, relying heavily on the textbook for lesson content, determines both the quality and the content of the lessons; then the nature of the teacher's interaction with the textbook is crucial" (p137). So he rewrote passages from the textbooks, making them thematically coherent, with accessible English, explanations and clear references. Checking the rewritten texts with teachers, he found that teachers comprehended both the overall ideas and the detailed knowledge much better than before. Langhan did not continue in his research, but presumably this increased understanding would have its effect on classroom practice.

Macdonald did in fact introduce new draft materials into the classrooms and found that they "significantly altered the nature of the teacher's interaction with the learners, in a positive

direction (Macdonald, 1991, p65). She identifies the conditions under which the right kind of texts can support positive change:

> The first condition is that the teachers be trained in the use of the materials, because they will be involved with methodology and materials which are not yet familiar. ... The second condition is that the material must not seem too complicated and strange to the teachers. (p65)

4.3.1.2 Mozambique - Judith Marshall

In that light it is interesting to look at Judith Marshall's (1990) research into literacy education in a Mozambican factory. Marshall had been part of the team that designed and tested the new literacy curriculum materials in 1982. Between 1985-7 she observed teachers and students working with the materials. The mismatch between the vision of the course writers and the reality of the classroom was "enough to make me {her} weep" (p212).

The literacy course was based on emancipatory and communicative second language principles. It suggested that a mix of languages be used in the first stages of learning Portuguese; provided pictures and reading texts on various aspects of the changing Mozambican reality, with sample discussion questions relating it to learners' lives; made suggestions for real life writing and reading tasks, group-work, games and active demonstrations; and was carried by a vision of literacy as validating the life experience of workers and "the possibility of constructing rather than transmitting knowledge" (p231). In its intention, it was a convivial tool.

Marshall found that teachers deliberately and systematically deleted "all the steps in the suggested lesson plan that took them out of a lecturing, authority role and involved active teaching methods and group work. Rote learning with drills using the pointer was the norm" (p217). Teachers demanded that students speak 'pure' Portuguese, interrupting their every utterance to correct grammar and accent. Greetings became chorus drills, not an exchange of information. Discussions became a series of closed questions, which never made the link to learners' lives. Errors were pounced on as proof of learner ignorance, not probed or used for teaching. The course book was seen as the only source of legitimate learning - accessible newspapers, letters and other forms of everyday written communication were ignored. And no learning could take place without the teacher: learners' initiative to work ahead or to write more than instructed in their exercise books was discouraged.

Marshall was outraged at this way of interacting which made learners "appear stupid and incompetent" (p231). But she also recognised that it was part of a pervading conception of what it meant to be a teacher. The teachers' "own experience of schooling clearly had been ones of transmission of knowledge always in extremely formal, vertical settings" (p213). They ignored active learning exercises because colonial schooling, with its formality and rigid discipline, had made it impossible for them to think of learning as having an element of fun. They had no repertoire of techniques for providing encouragement and support to students, but then they had never experienced it themselves. And maybe, deep down, they did not actually believe that their adult students could still learn to read and write.

Marshall also illustrates how everything in the educational context - the teacher training, the departmental examinations at the end of each year, and even the attitudes of the learners - conspired to keep teachers in this frame of mind.

The teacher training provided no alternative model:

> The content (of the brief training programme for literacy teachers) was teaching methods rather than some other discipline like history or geography, but the form reinforced all of the old stances. The style of interaction between the literacy instructor and the trainee was one of giving and receiving, active and passive, authority and powerlessness bearer of knowledge and empty vessel. Nowhere had the teachers encountered an educational setting where the students' ideas and experiences and voices were taken as central. (p213)

The examination system valued transmitted knowledge:

> The sole measurement of literacy success were quantitative - attendance and marks on the final exam. ... Yet the exams themselves were so unpredictable. The inexperienced literacy staff encountered major problems in setting, distributing and marking the exams. ... The methods of evaluating literacy success played a powerful role in consolidating the value placed on certain kinds of knowledge and expertise, and making other kinds of knowledge and expertise entirely invisible. (p232-3)

The learners were caught in the same mind set and accepted their position without question:

> The students themselves, on entering the classroom, left behind any sense of themselves as able, functioning adults with responsibilities in workplace, home and community. They readily assumed a posture of ignorance and passivity and defeat. (p231)

In contrast to the Std 3 geography textbooks, the Mozambican literacy course materials were well written, coherent and appropriate to the learners' background - a tribute to the old-timers in the practice who wrote them. But when it came to classroom reality, the conception embedded in the course materials became subordinate to the conception of the teacher. Their emancipatory and communicative teaching methods had no chance of being used as intended in

a context where their progressive conception of learning clashed with the prevalent authoritarian conception of teaching. Macdonald's second condition for materials contributing to positive change - the materials not appearing too strange - was not fulfilled.

This insight is also echoed in research from the United States.

4.3.1.3 USA - Catherine Cornbleth

Cornbleth (1990) describes two research studies which both illustrate how "intended curriculum changes were adapted or co-opted to mesh with existing circumstances" (p89).

Popkewitz, Tabachnick & Wehlage (observed the implementation of the IGE (Individually Guided Education) curriculum management reform in six schools. IGE involved students working individually or in groups on systematically sequenced materials so as to master a series of behaviourally stated objectives. IGE had a particular conception of learning and teaching: it valued individualism, school efficiency and meritocratic reward, and put itself forward as a "universal, non-ideological model for elementary school reform" (p93).

Popkewitz et.al. observed the teaching-learning practices in each of the schools and classified them into three types: constructive, technical and illusory. Constructive schooling "emphasises multiple ways by which children can come to know about the world ... how knowledge is created ... Knowledge is treated as permeable and provisional, ideas as tentative, and often ambiguous" (p77). Technical schooling "emphasises procedures to enhance efficiency. Knowledge was standardised; all important ideas and skills were measurable and expressed in a discrete, sequenced form ... technologies and procedures rose to the status of values" (p77). Illusory schooling "provides little academic or subject matter knowledge as children and the teachers engage in the rituals and ceremonies of reading, writing and arithmetic, but in practice ... the substance of teaching is not carried through. What occurs is an emphasis on form *as* substance (p78).[9]

[9] Comparing these types of schooling to Grundy's categories, the technical and constructive types fit her technical and practical knowledge constitutive interests. Grundy's categories make no allowance for illusory schooling (which could also be called bureaucratic). Maybe it is because I had experienced so much illusory/bureaucratic teaching and that in comparison, technical teaching seemed a step forward, that I was immediately wary of Grundy's discarding of the technical.

Popkewitz et.al. then looked at how IGE was implemented in these schools and concluded that

> personnel used IGE in very different ways compatible with their local school and community contexts ... they adapted both the IGE technology and its stated goals in ways that helped conserve differing prior conditions in the schools (p76).

The fact that it is possible to use the same materials to teach such opposing views of knowledge, i.e. that ideas are tentative vs. that all important ideas are measurable, means that teachers are very powerful mediators of materials when it comes to implementation.

Cornbleth's own research into how teachers reacted to a reorientation of their social studies curriculum to foster critical thinking, reached the same conclusion. She then analysed why teachers felt it necessary to make critical thinking "congruent with existing practice ... and relatively safe" (p88). She found three powerful contextual factors. Firstly, teachers had "pre-existing beliefs and practices" (p85). Teachers fitted the new ideas about critical thinking into their overall conception of teaching and adapted them in the process. Secondly, the conditions of classroom teaching - large classes, limited time and expectations "that teachers obtain student acquiescence to content coverage, if not mastery, in an orderly manner" (p86) - made it impractical to teach critical thinking unless it was presented as a circumscribed skill. Thirdly, the evaluation policies of the school district, which were aimed at "improving student achievement as measured by standardised and other tests" (p87) militated against critical thinking.

Comparing Marshall's and Cornbleth's reasons for teachers' adaptations, two factors are the same: the teachers' conceptions of teaching and the official evaluation process. And the third reason, classroom reality (Cornbleth) and students' conception (Marshall), actually amount to the same thing too - the adult students in Mozambique were behaving as if they were one of 60 children in a crowded classroom.

This is not to say that the new materials made no difference. Both the IGE and the Critical Thinking Project gave teachers new ways of talking about what they were doing, and provided skills for new activities and grading procedures. And the teaching in Mozambique could well have been even more authoritarian if the course book had also belittled the students. But Cornbleth argues, “beneath this appearance of change, the substance of teaching and learning persisted much as it had before” (p89).

That raises serious questions about what it takes to change that substance. I mentioned Cornbleth’s answer in chapter 1: that for curriculum change to take root, it needs supportive

structural changes, which in turn require contextual pressures or supports. Consensus reality of what it means to be in "school" seems very hard to break out of.

However, in this chapter my aim is still to explore what learning-teaching materials can do to change that reality in even small ways. Langhan's work illustrated the responsibilities that such materials need to fulfil: to be coherent and appropriate to the learners in question. Marshall's work illustrated an additional responsibility: to take into account the conception of teaching held by the teachers and the educational context. Cornbleth's work spoke to the power of the context and how multi-layered efforts to change teachers' conceptions must be.

So, having presented readings about the responsibilities of texts and their limitations, I want now to move on by looking at the issue from the perspective of the teacher. Both Marshall's and Cornbleth's research indicated the powerful influence of the teacher's conception on what they are doing. Daniel Pratt, coming from the field of adult education, has some interesting findings to contribute on the subject of different conceptions of teaching.

4.3.2 Conceptions of Teaching - Daniel Pratt

Daniel Pratt (1992) and his team interviewed 253 adult educators in Canada, China, Hong Kong, Singapore and the USA about their actions, intentions and beliefs with regard to teaching. Pratt explored educators' conceptions in relation to the following elements of the teaching situation: "Content (what was to be learned); Learners (the nature of adult learners and the learning process); Teachers (roles, functions and responsibilities); Ideals (purposes of adult education); Context (external factors that influence teaching and/or learning) ... and the relationships between elements" (p205). From their responses, Pratt distilled five conceptions of teaching that guided the work of the educators. Briefly summarised, the conceptions that emerged from the interviews were:

An Engineering Conception: Delivering Content

This conception placed a heavy emphasis on the transmission of information. Knowledge was believed to be relatively stable and external to the learner. Learning was measured in terms of specific competencies and/or the mastery of a body of knowledge. Of prime concern were efficient means of delivering content and achieving goals. This conception was voiced most often by people working within an institution with accountability, or with well-defined content / skills to be learned (p210-11).

An Apprenticeship Conception: Modelling Ways of Being

This conception saw the body of established wisdom and knowledge as embedded in expert practitioners. Such experts were expected to introduce novices to the best ideas, values, and methods of practice available. Working with a notion of "craft knowledge", this conception understood learning to be something that happened within the context of practice. It was most often voiced by people within professional mentor relationships, vocational apprenticeships and medical internships (p212-3).

A Developmental Conception: Cultivating the Intellect

This conception was learner-centred, focused on facilitating intellectual development and personal autonomy. Knowledge was never taken for granted and authority was open to question. What individuals already know and think about something significantly influenced learning, so the teacher had to identify thresholds of understanding as the starting point for teaching and then challenge learners to go beyond present ways of problem solving. The focus was on the learning process, with content as the vehicle by which teachers could help people to learn how to learn and achieve higher levels of thinking. This conception was most visible within higher education in Canada and the USA and was the only conception absent from interviews in China (p213-4).

A Nurturing Conception: Facilitating Personal Agency

Another learner-centred conception, nurturing described a way of relating where genuine regard for the other person and a concern for the relationship bound the two together. A common theme was the balance between caring and challenging, supporting and directing. Learning was to be self-initiated, personally involving and evaluated by the learner. Significant learning was not associated with content or higher forms of cognition, but with the enhancement of self-concept and personal agency. This conception was most evident in formal adult educational contexts in the USA and Canada, and in ABE, self-help groups and literacy programmes (p214-5).

A Social Reform Conception: Seeking a Better Society

This conception operated with an explicitly stated ideal linked to a vision of a better social order which guided the person's teaching - be it an ethical code, a religious doctrine or a political ideology. The teaching process was framed from within a conviction that this ideal was appropriate to all people and necessary for a better society. The dominance of the ideal overshadowed all other elements of teaching. Although the nature of the ideal varied, this

conception was evident in all five cultures and seemed to be more a function of the individual than either the cultural or educational context (p216-7).

Pratt found that although these five conceptions were qualitatively different, they were not mutually exclusive - most educators held two or three, even if one was dominant. The mix of conceptions was usually related to people's belief structure and to their educational context.[10]

I find it interesting that internationally, the nurturing conception was linked to ABE and literacy work. If one surveyed ABET teachers in South Africa, it would probably be the dominant conception here too. If one observed teachers, the influence of the transmission conception might well become visible. And one would probably find echoes of the social reform conception, although that ideal has largely been shifted away from ABET into the political and community arena.[11] ABET discourse does not include much of the developmental conception - but it is an ideal in the 'Generic Competencies' and the purposeful reading and writing required for the IEB examinations are very challenging to the field.

Pratt emphasised that the conceptions of teaching were dynamic and evolved with experience, which opens a space for the influence of teacher training. "Efforts to improve teaching may focus on the refinement of existing conceptions and practices or may attempt to change those conceptions. The former is more common; the latter more difficult" (p218). He also found that one could not associate specific methods and techniques with particular conceptions of teaching. Lecturing, for example, cut across all of them. Yet an educator's approach to evaluation and assessment was the most accurate indicator of their conception of teaching. And finally, Pratt maintains: "it would be wrong to conclude that some conceptions are better than

[10] Comparing these five conceptions, derived empirically, to Grundy's three knowledge constitutive interests, derived theoretically, it first seemed as if they moved at a tangent that never quite met. Yet one can make links: the engineering conception relates to the technical interest, the apprenticeship, developmental and nurturing conceptions relate to the practical interest, and the social reform relates to the emancipatory interest. But it is not so simple. Social reform ideals can be fundamentalist and accepting of authority, which would not fit into an emancipatory interest, while the developmental conception, although concerned with the individual not society, contains the critical component that is essential for the emancipatory interest.

[11] In an essay submitted as part of the Masters Course, ("A New Generation of Practitioners for Adult Basic Education (ABE) in South Africa") I explored the conceptions of teaching embedded in two South African ABET practitioner training courses. I found that the *Practitioner Training Course for ABET* offered by UNISA worked from within a transmission and a nurturing conception, while the *Internship Programme to Develop ABE Leadership* run by NASA and the University of Natal came from an apprenticeship and developmental conception. In a post-election South Africa, neither mentioned social reform, although both programmes firmly located ABE in a social context.

others. Each has philosophical and epistemological roots which are consonant with particular people, purposes and contexts" (p218).

It seems obvious that educators' relationships with texts, which carry the content and methodology for teaching, will be shaped by their different conceptions of what it means to be teaching. Educators will have different attitudes to the value of materials, will be drawn to some materials rather than others, and will use texts in different ways. Playfully imagining different possibilities, I can see how a teacher with an engineering conception would think of the textbook as very important, especially if the teacher did not have all the content in her own head. A teacher with an apprentice conception might ignore all materials unless they were written by herself. A teacher with a developmental conception would want to use several texts and contrast them with one another. A teacher with a nurturing conception might use texts erratically, wherever she saw fit. And a social reform conception teacher would use a textbook only if she wholeheartedly agreed with its message.

Pratt's research points to the different conceptions that teachers might hold and how these conceptions involve different approaches to knowledge and learners, to content and methodology, and thus also to teaching-learning materials. The variations are endless. There is no one right or one wrong way for teachers and texts to work together. But there are some elements that make for good co-operation between them. I want to turn to Polanyi for a teasing out of those elements.

4.3.3 Authority and Trust - Michael Polanyi

Polanyi (1978) writes about the "transmission of social lore" (p207-209), not about the relationship between teachers and texts. But if we go back to the image of teachers and texts as participants in a practice, with teachers as relative old-timers and texts as representatives of old-timers in the practice, then the principles that Polanyi describes as underlying the transmission of culture from one generation to the next can be applied to this situation.

Simplified, Polanyi's argument goes as follows: There is so much cultural knowledge that people can never learn or experience it all themselves. They need to accept it as true knowledge provided by experts in the various fields. The ability to learn a body of knowledge thus depends on an "act of affiliation, by which the novice accepts apprenticeship in a community which cultivates this lore, appreciates its values and strives to act by its

standards" (p207). This allegiance is a personal commitment and requires an act of submission: one needs to place one's trust in the authority of the master.

But Polanyi is not making an argument for blind submission to authority. He qualifies as follows:

> Every acceptance of authority is qualified by some measure of reaction to it or even against it. Submission to a consensus is always accompanied to some extent by the imposition of one's views on the consensus to which we submit. Every time we use a word in speaking and writing we both comply with usage and at the same time somewhat modify the existing usage. ... For I submit to what I myself think the current consensus teaches and by joining the consensus on these terms I affect its content (p208).

So there is a dual process when learning in a practice: trusting in authority and, by participation, creating changes in that authority. It is a dynamic relationship, which accords power both to the person learning, because their voice affects changes, and to the person teaching (or being learned from), because their knowledge is respected. The relationship also accords responsibility to both parties: the learner needs to place their confidence in the knowledge and the process of acquiring it, the person in authority needs to provide truthful knowledge, worthy of trust.

Relating this idea to teachers (relative old-timers who are still learning themselves) and texts (the written expression of old-timers) provides a new way of thinking about the relationship. No longer is the text an authoritarian imposition that must be slavishly followed, outwitted, rebelled against or discarded. The text can be a trustworthy authority with which teachers enter into a dynamic relationship, both learning from it and adding to it. Polanyi's ideas indicate what a productive relationship between text and teachers might look like: based on trust, with teachers both accepting the authority of the materials and adapting that authority by adding their voice.

This takes me to the last section in this chapter, which attempts to understand how that dynamic relationship can play itself out in the process of teaching and learning.

4.3.4 Scaffolding and the ZPD - Neil Mercer

Neil Mercer's description of the concepts of 'scaffolding' and the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), as developed by Jerome Bruner and Lev Vygotsky respectively,

provides a useful lens through which to understand the interaction between teachers, texts and learners. The concept of 'scaffolding' looks at the teaching and learning process from the perspective of teaching, while the concept of ZPD is useful to understand the same process from the perspective of learning.

'Scaffolding' provides "an effective conceptual metaphor for the quality of teacher intervention in learning" (Mercer, 1994, p96). It is the support that a teacher provides to learners who are striving to understand new ideas or master new skills. It is not a particular methodology but a process that involves many different techniques and ways of interacting. 'Scaffolding' techniques change over time as learners grow in ability. 'Scaffolding' implies an orientation towards teaching that sees the learner as active and motivated, with the teacher in the role of guide, mediator and support.

In order to differentiate between any kind of teacher's help and the quality of help that is envisaged by the concept of 'scaffolding', Mercer offers the following definition:

> ‘Scaffolding' is help which will enable a learner to accomplish a task which they would not have been quite able to manage on their own, and it is help which is intended to bring the learner closer to a state of competence which will enable them eventually to complete such a task on their own. ... To know whether or not some help counts as 'scaffolding', we would need to have at the very least some evidence of a teacher wishing to enable a child to develop a specific skill, grasp a particular concept or achieve a particular level of understanding. A more stringent requirement would be to require some evidence of a learner successfully accomplishing the task with the teacher's help. An even more stringent interpretation would be to require some evidence of a learner having achieved some greater level of independent competence as a result of the 'scaffolding' experience (p97).

Mercer argues that learning materials cannot 'scaffold'. They can provide support and guidance, but no feedback (p100). At some point the learners will always hit a problem and need the "supportive intervention" (p101) of the teacher.

Mercer points out that it would be limiting to see 'scaffolding' as only a "strategic intervention" (p101) at the moment when the learner is engaged in the activity. 'Scaffolding' is also involved in the "planning and design" (p101) of the activities. In fact, defining the nature of the task, organising how learners can work on it, relating it to other learning experiences, introducing and explaining the task - a whole range of pedagogical and curriculum content decisions - are a part of the teacher's 'scaffolding' responsibility.

If it is true, as Mercer argues, that materials cannot 'scaffold', then in what way is 'scaffolding' a useful metaphor to apply to the relationship between teachers and texts? For the discussion of this chapter, I am proposing that the responsibility for 'scaffolding' be shared between the text and the teacher. The teaching-learning materials provide the overall "planning and design", the teacher provides the lesson-to-lesson planning and the "strategic interventions". The text guides and supports by presenting the content and sequence of the learning programme, and by defining the nature and level of difficulty of each task or each series of tasks. The teacher mediates between the text and the learners by pacing the lessons, by introducing topics and eliciting learner responses, by adding her knowledge to fill the inevitable gap between learners and text, and by supporting learners whenever they have difficulties with the exercises. The text is responsible for the overall progression of content and skill, while the teacher is responsible for interaction and feedback.

'Scaffolding' is most effective when it is given within a learner's Zone of Proximal Development, i.e. given to a learner for whom that learning is within grasp. If the task to be accomplished lies beyond the learner's zone of development, then 'scaffolding' becomes ineffective. Either the teacher ends up doing the task for the learner or the learner does not perform the task.

Vygotsky defines the Zone of Proximal Development as "the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more able peers" (p101). In easy English, this is the gap between what learners can already do on their own and the things they can do only in co-operation with a teacher or fellow learners. Once I could see through the lens of this concept, I was amazed to notice how much more clearly learners (including myself) could express themselves when working in pairs, small groups, or in conversation with the teacher, as compared to when they were working on their own.

The concept of a Zone of Proximal Development implies that a learner can always understand more than what they can produce. The learner has knowledge, but can't yet express or perform it in the way required by the particular practice being learned. But with some 'scaffolding' from a teacher, achievement becomes possible. The ZPD defines the space in which people learn.

One implication of this is that any learning-teaching materials that lie beyond the learners' ZPD make the teacher's scaffolding task very difficult, if not impossible. A teacher cannot elicit and explain if the gap between what the learners know and what the materials demand is too large. When working outside of the learners' ZPD, a teacher can only tell and learners can only copy. As Langhan was quoted above: "textbooks that are above the competence level of the users 'impose' the rote learning style".

It might also be possible to apply this idea - i.e. that 'scaffolding' works only within a learner's Zone of Proximal Development - to the issue of the difference between the conceptions of teaching/learning held by teachers and those embedded in materials. As relative old-timers, teachers can learn things about methodology or new ways of seeing the knowledge of a practice from old-timers and from texts written by them. Good teaching-learning materials, because they embody methodology as well content, have something to teach teachers about teaching. So it is potentially possible for materials to be a 'scaffold' for teachers' growing knowledge about teaching methodology. By giving teachers the steps to follow when developing learners' skills, materials can 'scaffold' the teachers' knowledge of the practice.

But there are two provisos. One is that, in the same way as 'scaffolding' is shared between the materials and the teacher when it comes to supporting learners, so 'scaffolding' must be shared between teacher training and the materials when it comes to supporting teachers. As teachers mediate the materials to learners with regard to content and skills, so the teacher training needs to mediate the materials to teachers with regard to conceptions of teaching and methodology. The other proviso is that the methodology and conception of teaching in the materials must lie within the Zone of Proximal Development of the teacher's conception. If the gap between the conceptions is too large, then no amount of 'scaffolding' provided by the teacher training is going to bridge that gap - the teacher might use more 'progressive' jargon, but will not change their classroom practice. Only if the materials "do not appear too strange" (Macdonald, see above), and the teacher is moving (or wanting to move) into the conception embodied in the materials, will the materials be able to have a ‘scaffolding’ effect.

The concepts of 'scaffolding' and Zone of Proximal Development are a useful way of understanding how teachers can work with texts to support learners and how teachers themselves can learn from texts.

4.3.5 Concluding Comment

In this second section of chapter 4, I worked with the metaphor of teaching-learning materials as representative of old-timers in a practice who want to pass on the essence of the practice to newcomers, i.e. learners, and at the same time want to support the relative old-timers in their understanding of what it means to be teachers in the practice. I have illustrated how several conditions need to be fulfilled before the relationship between teachers and texts can be a productive one.

Firstly, the texts need to have authority in the practice, meaning they must be a trustworthy reflection of the practice and appropriate to the particular needs of the learners to be catered for. Secondly, the conception of teaching and learning embodied by the materials needs to fit with the conception held by the teacher and the educational context. Thirdly, teachers need to have trust in the value of the materials they are using and simultaneously feel free to make adjustments and add their own voice to that of the text. And lastly, if materials are being used to develop and shift the teacher's conception, then the texts need be just within reach of the teachers' Zone of Proximal Development. If these conditions are fulfilled, teaching-learning materials can be a useful contributing factor in the ongoing effort to improve the way that learning happens.

4.4 Conceptual Tools Developed in this Chapter

Several conceptual tools were gathered during this chapter which will provide the underlying organizing principles of the findings in the next chapter.

Firstly, the chapter developed the notion that it is possible to integrate conceptions of literacy as skill and literacy as empowerment through a recognition of literacy as social practice. Inducting people into the social practice of literacy means that they are required to master skills, that they must be able to make decisions about the uses of those skills in practical situations and that they must become aware of the emancipation to which those skills can enable access. This creates criteria for course materials, teacher training, classroom practice, i.e. for any of the multiple aspects of curriculum work.

Secondly, it established the metaphor of teachers and texts having different roles in a community of educational practice. Learners are newcomers, teachers are relative old-timers and texts are the representatives of expert old-timers in the practice, with shifting relationships between them. As relative old-timers, teachers can learn from the expert knowledge embedded in the texts if the texts are true authorities in the practice and teachers are prepared to place their trust that authority. Still, what they can learn depends on the fit between their own conception of teaching and that of the text.

Thirdly, it presented the concepts of 'scaffolding' and the ZPD as applicable to the learning process of both teachers and learners. Teacher training and materials can 'scaffold' the growth of teachers within the ZPD of their conception of teaching, while teachers and materials can 'scaffold' learners in the development of their literacy skills. 'Scaffolding' in the ZPD of teachers and learners provides a way of thinking about possibilities for the implementation of curriculum change and transformation.

CHAPTER 5 Presenting the Findings: The Interplay between Teachers, Text and Context

5.1 Introduction

This chapter describes the heart of the research journey: the field trip. The aim of the research trip was to find answers to the questions presented in chapter 1 about convivial course materials, teachers' use of innovative methodology and the influence of context on the relationship between teachers and texts. This meant that there were large areas of interest, like the interplay between learners and texts, that I did not look at. The structural context of the trip was the practice of adult basic education and training (ABET) as described in chapter 2, and as implemented specifically in industrial, urban settings. The means of travel, of moving through the field, was ethnography, with its methodological tools of thick descriptions and the interpretation of social behaviour as outlined in chapter 3. The equipment I took along to help me see more specifically were the concepts developed in chapter 4: the integration of paradigms, the idea of texts as an authoritative and convivial tool representative of the practice, and the potential and limits of 'scaffolding'.

Once on the field trip, the questions as well as the methodological and conceptual tools receded into the background. I opened myself to what was happening and strove to describe it as accurately and as true to the situation as possible. To enable the voices of the teachers to be heard in their own right, this chapter presents many verbatim extracts from interviews and lesson observations. Readers should be able to get a feel for the dynamics of ABET classes. At times there are comments and interpretations to place the descriptions in context, but I have tried to separate my voice from that of the teachers, so that readers can judge for themselves whether or not they agree with my understandings. This chapter does not engage in the process of analysis. That task is left for the reflections in chapter 6.

5.2 The Teachers and their Contexts

This section introduces the teachers, their work places, their classrooms and their motivations as ABET practitioners. In line with ethnographic methodology, the data is presented in the form of a thick description. Because the research findings unfold within a context, it is important first to become familiar with the people and their situation. The descriptions of each teacher aim to give a clear impression of the "total scene", and begin the process of illustrating how the individuals involved "make sense of and give meaning to what is going on" (Wolcott, 1984, p179).

5.2.1 Elizabeth Mokgata

Elizabeth Mokgata teaches at the Robertson's factory in Alrode, an industrial area near Alberton. Robertson's makes spices, condiments, mayonnaise, baking essences and insect poisons, which they display in the reception area. Their mission statement emphasises the "employment and development of people capable of making the company be competitive", as well as an expansion of sales to all "demographic groups" in SA and the African continent. I presume that their ABET programme is an expression of that orientation.

Elizabeth is responsible for teaching the English ABET classes, supervising the mother tongue ABET teacher and generally running the ABET programme. But ABET is only one aspect of her job: she also handles the administration of the training department and the career planning for all staff, reporting to the Human Resources manager. When I met her, she was at reception busy organising cheques for people registering with the Technicon that afternoon. As we walked across the factory grounds, everybody we met greeted her and several asked questions - about a meeting, a cheque, transport arrangements or whatever.

The literacy class takes place in a small outbuilding at the far end of the factory grounds, where smells of the insecticide 'Doom' waft across periodically. Inside, there are four hexagonal tables, with just enough space to squash between tables. There is a white board, and some mother tongue posters and mind maps decorate the walls. There is a cupboard in the room and a large word maker on a side table. A small room leads off this room forming an L-shape. It functions as a library and has quite a few books on the shelves, including some of CEP's book boxes.

There are 13 learners in this English level 1 class, 8 men and 5 women. Some learners come wearing their work overalls and caps, others come in their own clothes. I observed 5 two-hour lessons. The work covered during that time was:

> *Make A Date*, pages 37 - 55,
>
> A pamphlet and celebration for Adult Learners Week.

Elizabeth has been teaching ABET for two years. She has a teacher's diploma, is currently studying Communications, and is doing the ABET certificate through UNISA. She has attended the teacher training and the co-ordinator training course at CEP and receives ongoing support from them through refresher courses, occasional observations, and CEP's attendance at Robertson's monthly ABET committee meetings.

Elizabeth enjoys teaching ABET: "It gives me pleasure when I realise that my learners do remember what I have taught them. I was particularly pleased when I realised that they hold their books freely when they come to class, instead of hiding them away." (Written Communication) She is pleased with feedback from managers and colleagues about the improvement her learners show at work and delights in the fact that all of them were able to pass the IEB July exams.

Her reservations about ABET arise from its marginal status: she told me that in terms of a career, it is much better to be on the Human Resources side. When a company has difficulties, the first department to be retrenched is Training, whereas Human Resources people are still needed to handle personnel matters. Working as a trainer alone gives one too few options and not enough status in the business world.

Elizabeth is concerned with people's advancement. She fights for ABET people to get promotion within the company. She supports workers going to courses at Damelin or the Technicon. And she demands results:

> If they do not pass, I ask them for the money back, so that we have more money in the training budget to send other workers on courses. So I am not very popular. But I believe that people should not sit and do nothing for themselves and then expect others to foot the bill. With that attitude, when are we going to be self-sufficient? (Interview)

5.2.2 Joseph Kameta

Joseph Kameta is a full-time teacher at the Karee Mine Training Centre in Marikana near Rustenburg. The training centre is a small complex about 2 km from the head office, in the open veld in view of the shaft headgear. Built around a grassed courtyard, there are five classrooms, a caravan classroom at the back, three offices, a kitchen, a toilet and a change room. The white staff congregate in the room marked "technical trainer", the black staff hang out in one marked "clerks". Five cockerels walk around freely, destined for the pot but still too small.

Besides short-term mining courses, there are two full-time ABET classes running from 7 a.m. to 2 p.m. every day.

The learners are team leaders who are expected by management to get a blasting certificate. The prerequisite for entering the blasting course is ABET 3 in English and numeracy. So the ABET 2 learners will in fact be studying full-time for a year - 6 months to get the IEB level 2 certificates and another six months for level 3. How long it then takes to get the blasting certificate, I do not know.

There were 10 men in the ABET 2 class. Most of them were migrants and they spoke Sotho, Swazi and Mozambican Shangaan. In contrast to the mineworkers who came for their short courses wearing overalls and hard hats, the ABET learners were well dressed in their own clothes. The classroom was spacious, with a large blackboard, a notice board with safety posters in English and Afrikaans, and an air conditioner. The learners sat around 2 tables, 5 to a table, and kept their same seats from one day to the next. The teacher had his table in front of the blackboard and I was given a table on the side towards the front. I observed for three days. The work covered during that time was:

Extracts from *Present Tense, Past Tense, Write On, Speak English, Counting,*
Survival 1 from EFA, lessons 32 & 33
Numeracy Workbook 1 from M&T Focus, random exercises
A visit to the ABET Library
A formal debate and a game

Joseph Kameta comes from Malawi. He left school after Std 9. In Malawi, he was a part-time teacher but he did not have any training. He taught literacy part-time in the hostel before getting this full-time teaching job. The mine then sent him on CEP courses: one week for

English and one week for numeracy run by M&T Focus. Sometimes he goes on refresher courses.

Joseph likes his job as a teacher. He enjoys going out on courses, and learning new things about teaching. He sees it as a challenge: "The important thing is just to put in effort and to follow the instructions. I read these books and I follow the instructions and I add some things. I am not right yet in these matters as I am still new, but I will be okay." (Interview)

Like Elizabeth, Joseph is concerned with advancement. But for him, the results are difficult to achieve. He constantly exhorts his learners to study hard. At the end of one day he said:

> These books are not flowers for you to put on your table and leave there. They are your future. Keep up this learning, this is your opportunity. I am 38 and I am still studying by correspondence, so don't listen to people who say that learning is not for adults. If you practise, you will make it. Take the shyness away, be brave. Its like when you ask a lady to marry you. If she refuses you the first time, you carry on and eventually she will know that you really want her and she will agree to marry you. (Observation, day 3)

5.2.3 Selina Legong

Selina Legong is employed as a part-time ABET teacher by Nampak Paper in Rosslyn, an industrial area north west of Pretoria. A stench of rotting rubbish pours across the Nampak factory yard at all times, even with a strong wind. When I asked a shop steward where the smell comes from, I was told it comes from the chemicals - and that SAPPI and other paper companies stink even more.

Fortunately the ABET classroom is out of the way, behind the huge factory buildings, where the smell has faded. Nampak took ABET seriously enough to invest in a Zozo trailer. Selina told me they used to meet in the training room in the administration building but were disturbed by other courses, and so the trailer was acquired solely for ABET classes. Shaped like a railway carriage, it has air conditioning and wood panelled walls, making it feel like a cool haven for learning. The tables and chairs are new and strong. The walls speak of the learning here: there are literacy posters, a map, newspaper articles about political matters and the budget for adult learning. There are also newsprints containing work the class has done: a list of words and their meanings, a 24 hour clock face, street signs, handwriting exercises, an alphabet chart, a person with labels on all their body parts and the lesson times. There are two flip charts, but no blackboard. In the corner, there is a cupboard filled with

sets of ELP books and stationery. On a spare table there is space for one set of the CEP box library.

There are 14 learners, all men, including one from Czechoslovakia, in the English level 2 class. The tables, which seat 4 learners each, are arranged in a long row. This makes it difficult for learners at one end of the room to hear what those at the other end are saying. Whenever the teacher talks, she must stand in the middle of the room to be heard. But it is difficult to see how else one could arrange the furniture, as the room is so long and narrow. I observed 4 two-hour lessons. The work covered during that time was:

Introduction to English Grammar, pages 49-55,

Present Tense, pages 0-8.

Selina Legong has been teaching ABET for less than a year. She is paid by the hour to teach English levels 2 and 1 as well as a mother-tongue literacy class. Selina is a qualified primary school teacher but left teaching in the eighties, not wanting to work with school learners anymore. When she got this ABET teaching job, she registered with the UNISA ABET course and passed all her exams. CEP also gave her training: one week for mother-tongue and one week for English levels 1 and 2. CEP now supports her through observations and refresher workshops.

Selina enjoys teaching in ABET mainly because the relationship with learners is one of respect, very different from what happens in schools. She thinks a lot about her role as a teacher, finding ways of encouraging learners or getting them to participate actively. She thinks that:

> Teaching adults is not easy. Teachers must not be irritable, they must take time, some learners are even stubborn, so teachers must be patient and know how to solve their problems. The teacher's personality is important for learners. They must always encourage learners. In the olden days, teachers used to lash us and in the end we just left that subject. It is in the power of a teacher to destroy somebody for their life time. So it is the teacher's responsibility to give light and encouragement. (Interview)

5.2.4 Richard Worthington

Richard Worthington is an ABET teacher at three different workplaces, one of which is Lanseria Airport, owned by the National Airways Corporation (NAC).

Lanseria Airport is a private airport north of Johannesburg. The ABET class takes place in the training room for pilots. It is a long room, with windows along one side, air conditioning, a large white-board, an overhead projector, a projector room behind the white-board, a lectern, and a table and chair for each person. The walls are covered with block mounted posters of flight control panels and aeroplane engines, with a few *Democracy Works!* posters published by Project Literacy stuck in between. Every now and then, aeroplanes take off noisily.

Before each lesson, Richard arranges the tables in a horseshoe format, with the open end facing the white-board. He either sits at the front table of the horseshoe, stands in front of the white-board or moves inside the horseshoe attending to individual learners. After each lesson, he moves the tables back into straight rows for the pilot training. There are 10 learners, 7 men and 3 women. The men are wearing overalls or blue shirts with blue trousers that look like ordinary clothes at first glance, the women are wearing corporate "uniforms", i.e. tailored clothes in various combinations.

I observed 5 two-hour lessons. The work covered during that time was:

Reading Stories, pages 11-24
Money and Shopping, pages 1-21
Two chapters from *The Fortune Snake Mamlambo*
Half a chapter from *Against the Wind*
A newspaper article
Various crosswords and numeracy worksheets
Library book swap outs.

Richard Worthington has been teaching in ABET for about 7 months. He has a BA from Wits and attended a one-month EFL course at International House in London. He also attended a one-week English training workshop at CEP and they occasionally come to observe classes. He taught EFL to children for a while before finding work in the ABET field. Other work experience that has helped with teaching were theatre productions at Wits and on the London Fringe as they gave him experience of working with different kinds of people.

Richard sees the marginal status of ABET as a challenge. He likes the flexible hours and variety, the space for trying things out and progressing with learners for a long period of time, in contrast to the limited or specialised teaching work in schools. But there are also frustrations: It is difficult to access information in the ABET world or to find work. Also, companies don't

pay enough attention to their ABET classes: "They wanted a programme, they hired me and now they hope that it will happen by itself. They need constant nudging to take ABET seriously." (Interview)

Richard gave detailed, specific feedback on the ELP workbooks, pointing out where texts were confusing, where exercises did not work or where they worked particularly well, where drawings needed to be changed etc. His motivation for participating in the research was his desire to give input into ELP's forthcoming repackaging and adaptation of the Course.

Richard cultivates a culture of learning. He comes half an hour early to do extra work with the weaker learners. He gives homework every lesson and marks it in such a way that learners feel their work is appreciated. He stays after class to exchange library books. He creates worksheets and crosswords so learners can have additional practice at home. He enjoys the learners' progress:

> There is a sense of satisfaction that comes from making a difference in people's lives. I can see over the months how people are getting better at finding their way around books. (Interview)

5.2.5 Thomas Mahambani

Thomas Mahambani teaches at Laursen Brothers, a division of BTR Dunlop, also in Rosslyn. The factory manufactures a variety of truck parts and employs about 80 people. Judging by the reception area, it is not a rich factory and the recurrent problem of working short-time was mentioned several times. There seems to be trust in the company though - the learners are the last people to leave the administration block in the evening and one of the learners has the key to the front door and is responsible for locking up.

Thomas has been working at Laursen Brothers for 24 years. During the day he works in stores and three times a week he teaches English in the late afternoon. Thomas needed time off work to do the interview, so we went to ask Mr Evans. Mr Evans is responsible for training in the company. He sees training as a way to improve morale in the company. The literacy training is the first step in his programme. To get it going, he sent out a note to everybody in the factory ("I don't believe in training for blacks only or for whites only, everybody must be offered the opportunity, even though some of my technical men come from England") and those men who were interested came forward for assessment. After the

assessment, Thomas went for training and the classes were started. When the literacy training is done, Mr Evans wants to introduce 6M and productivity training.

Thomas told me that:

> The company started literacy because they wanted to give job training courses but the majority of the workers were not literate enough. It is difficult to train someone in a job if he cannot read and write. So they want the workers to move up. This training is a new thing in the company. I think it was inspired by the RDP.

The training room is in the administration block, next to reception. It is a large room, with 6 small tables combined into one central table, a white board, a few filing cabinets and an obsolete computer standing in the corner. There is a safe cum stationery cupboard which leads off the training room and occasionally during the lesson people would walk through and fetch something from it. There are no posters or charts on the wall. Occasionally the room is used for other training as well.

There are 10 learners in the English level 2 class, all men. I observed 4 two-hour lessons. The work covered during that time came from *English at Work*, p14 - 26.

Thomas has been teaching in ABET for a year. This is his first English level 2 class - he spent last year teaching English Basic 1 (Laursen's terminology) and mother tongue literacy. He has a matric and did private teaching for a year before coming to work at Laursen. He went for training at CEP, one week for English and one week for mother-tongue. CEP supports him, but not very much, as Laursen does not have a contract with them.

Thomas is motivated to teach because of his experience as a shop steward:

> In meetings when we explain, the workers do not understand why those things must be. If they can read and write, everybody can sit down and talk and have a better way of negotiating. If people do not understand, they just say: 'aagh, him again, he likes to oppress us.
> We shop stewards found our meetings disrupted because of misunderstanding from both groups, management and workers. If people understand each other, there is no better tool at the workplace. But talking and understanding takes time and we shop stewards are in the middle. The workers think you sell out and the management thinks you are just talking from your own head or you are an agitator. So we must bring them together. (Interview)

5.2.6 Commonalties

To summarise, I want to point out the contextual commonalties. Referring back to Cornbleth's sub-division into socio-cultural and the education system's structural context, one can see how ABET policy has provided quite a clear framework for these teachers and classes.

As regards the socio-cultural context, the teachers are all working in an industrial setting, with employed learners. The companies engage in ABET to improve communication with workers, in the hope of increasing productivity. COSATU's ABET policy and the union's involvement has been influential in setting up classes. Yet ABET is a minor focus for the companies to which they allocate relatively few resources. Other socio-cultural factors like race, gender or class have not been a focus for this research.

As regards the educational context, the teachers are paid for their work either full or part-time. The companies provide proper rooms to teach in, workbooks and stationery for learners, and, in four out of five cases, access to box libraries. One group is full-time, the others meet 2 or 3 times a week for two hours, one hour of which is company time. Groups have 10-15 learners, with the composition of men and women being a reflection of the workplace. Four of the groups are preparing to write the IEB examinations, so that the learning receives national recognition. CEP is the main source of support, through initial teacher training, lesson observations and occasional refresher workshops. CEP recommends the use of the ELP Course, but teachers have the choice as to which workbooks they want to use. It is quite lonely work as there is no community of teachers to draw on. Joseph, Thomas and Elizabeth can exchange ideas with one other ABET teacher, while Richard and Selina are the only ABET teachers in their companies.

The facts that the teachers are paid, that classes meet regularly, that the companies pay for learners' books, that the IEB examinations provide levels to group classes around and a standard to be met, all provide these classes with much more structure and coherence than is usual in, for example, community classes. This financial and educational structure tends to make the use of course materials more coherent too.

5.3 Course Materials as a Convivial Tool

This section selects the teacher behaviours that provide insights into the question: 'Is the ELP course a convivial tool?' in terms of both the formulation originally derived from Eisner and the expanded notion of conviviality developed in the literature review. To recap, Eisner's notion of convivial materials demanded that they did not restrict the messages that could be conveyed, that they provided a structure while simultaneously providing options and stimulating ingenuity, and that they fostered a sense of competence in the teacher. The literature review added the notion of course materials as authoritative tools, as trustworthy representative of old-timers in the practice. In addition, the literature review clarified that in order for materials to be authoritative in the practice of adult literacy, they need to integrate the components of skill development, reflective judgement and emancipatory awareness.

As described in chapter 2, the ELP course intends to be an authoritative text representative of old-timers in the practice of adult basic second language literacy. As such, the course embodies accumulated knowledge and provides guidance with regard to the subject matter, the methodology and the overall programme of learning. It sets itself up as an authority that teaches learners and supports teachers.

Teachers, as relative old-timers, might be learners in relation to the course, but they are the authority in relation to learners, who are still newcomers in the practice of literacy and second language. While the ELP course outlines a possible learning path, it is the teachers' mediation of that path which makes the difference for learners. Teachers carry the responsibility for introducing their learners to the conventions that operate in a practice. What teachers do (and do not do) shapes what the learners begin to be able to do. Teachers can enable learners' access to texts and literacy activities in everyday life, or they can block that access by responding to the course in various ways. They can trust or challenge its authority, they can accept, adapt or subvert its guidance, they can understand, misunderstand or add to its knowledge. It is a three-way relationship: as teachers use the course and learn from it, they also add their voice to it and shape the course's impact on learners.

With that complex relationship in mind, this section aims to describe the interactions between the ELP course, the teachers, the learners and the context of the classroom. I am describing the nuances of that relationship under headings that are quotes from the teachers. As much as possible, I let teachers talk for themselves, so that their voices are heard and respected.

5.3.1 "I can't just teach from nowhere"

(Thomas Mahambani)

As described in Chapter 2, there was a learner-centred trend in ABET that rejected all structured learning programmes embodied in courses. So I was concerned to know what teachers thought about using textbooks in general and the ELP course in particular.

5.3.1.1 Why Teachers Use Course Materials

Textbooks, in general, outline a learning path by structuring content and tasks at increasing levels of difficulty. Teachers rely on them "to organise lessons and to structure subject matter" (Apple, 1991, p5). Textbooks provide the knowledge that learners need to acquire and the exercises which enable learners to develop the necessary skills. In their selection of content, they imply a certain perception of what counts as valid knowledge. In their methodology, they embody an approach to learning, implicitly teaching learners how to learn.

During the interviews, teachers were unanimous in wanting textbooks as the basis for their teaching. Thomas was the most explicit:

> It is no help to teach without textbooks. I would just be thinking and teaching from nowhere. If we have uniform books for the whole country, then we know how to prepare for the examination. I can't just teach from nowhere. (Interview)

The others agreed: "Books give me direction", "No, I would not like to teach without the books" were common responses. All the teachers relied on textbooks and presumed them to be a necessary part of the learning and teaching process. They wanted a scaffold to support them in their teaching.

During the observations, I saw how powerfully textbooks (in this case the ELP workbooks) influence what happens in class.

For one, the ELP workbooks provided the learning programme. The teachers went through the books before the lessons, preparing what they were going to teach. They followed the workbooks page by page, occasionally adding some things they considered important or skipping others. Some learners worked through the books on their own, either at home or during the lessons while they were waiting for slower learners. Looking through learners' workbooks, I found that all or most of the exercises had been filled in. The books created a

unified sense of where the classes were going. Because the books provided such a safe learning programme, they also enabled additional activities: Elizabeth made a pamphlet and organised tea to celebrate Adult Learners' Week, Richard handed out crossword puzzles and read entertaining stories from other books, Joseph arranged a visit to the ABET library, Selina spoke about a drama the learning group had prepared. Because the central learning programme was clear, additional activities were fun and enriching without creating a loss of direction.

Secondly, nearly all the vocabulary and the concepts that teachers explained during the lessons come out of the workbook they were using. Teachers made sure that learners understood all the words in the book and provided additional words that learners needed when talking about the topic presented by the book. The concepts they explained were mainly elaborations of those in the book or in response to learners' errors. The only kinds of concepts they added were ideas about the value of learning or how to learn.

Thirdly, most of the discussions during the lesson arose in response to the workbooks. I heard many interesting discussion during the observations - what presents people give to their husbands and wives and how they respond to gifts; whether or not crime fighting is getting tightened up; respect and the division of labour between men and women; negotiating with whites in the workplace - which were all sparked off by something in the books. Because the ELP workbooks created a climate of discussion, they enabled people to bring up other issues as well: the relative advantages of living in a mine hostel compared to living in a self-built shack; the causes of the huge rains that summer; fear of going home after lessons because of hostel violence, the dark, or Inkatha marches; the importance of exams and the value of certificates when looking for a job.

All this illustrates that the ELP workbooks were a powerful tool in terms of guiding and influencing what happened in class. The particulars of content and methodology embodied in the books created ripple effects in the classroom that shaped the learning and teaching experience quite definitively. The workbooks functioned as an authority which guided the learning.

5.3.1.2 Why Teachers Use the ELP Course

In all educational contexts there are political and pedagogical struggles over the legitimacy of textbooks. Which knowledge is accepted as valid and which approach to learning is seen to be the most appropriate in any particular subject is often hotly debated. In chapter 2 I described some of the contextual pressures and pedagogical debates that shaped the knowledge and methodology embodied in the ELP course. During the research, I wanted to know why teachers were working with this particular course as their text.

I found that their reasons were both intrinsic to the ELP course and related to contextual factors. The intrinsic reasons revealed criteria related to both content and methodology. The contextual factors had to with the course's relationship to nationally recognised exams and with the legitimacy of the process of choice.

The main attraction in terms of content was the immediate relevance to learners' adult lives:

> I chose the ELP books because they link to the daily life experience of the learners. Books would be of no use if they are far-fetched. The learners would just get confused. (Elizabeth)
> We chose these books because they are speaking about the relationship with the job, about job-related things. The learners will understand these better than if using the other books, because these books are more close to their own lives. (Thomas)

In particular, the life skills orientation of the course was seen as empowering:

> The books are very helpful, especially *Check Your Payslip*, because some mineworkers are not educated and when they are going to collect their pay, they don't see what's there on the slip. (Joseph)
> In *Counting*, the bank and post office deposit slips were particularly useful. Now the learners can go to the bank and the post office and fill in those slips themselves. (Thomas)
> In *Make a Date*, some learners did not know how to read a calendar. This planning on a calendar - some can do it and some cannot. The book teaches that you must plan before you can do a thing - that was new to most people. (Selina)

The communicative methodology of the course was seen as stimulating interactive learning:

> The best thing about *Introduction to English Grammar* are the discussions. Learners must work in pairs, in groups and must go around asking for information from other learners. It makes them talk and they love it so much. .. That is why they are so fluent now. (Selina)
> The dialogues in *Speak English* are great. Once learners have recognised the format, they can read and practice by themselves. It took a while to get learners not to be reading the names, but because the format was consistent throughout the book, it was not difficult to set up. (Richard)

But the intrinsic value of the ELP course would not be enough to get it selected if the contextual, legitimising factors were not also in place. A recurring question for teachers was: will learners pass the IEB exams if they do this course?

> If we have uniform books for the whole country, then we know how to prepare for the examination. (Thomas)
> We are preparing for the IEB exams. It is important that the learners certificates be fully recognised. The workbooks relate to the exam because the IEB takes from these books for the syllabus". (Joseph) (I had to explain that in fact, this is not the case. I offer it here as a perception that legitimises the use of the books.)
> Why is the IEB examination not taking more from the books? (Selina, Phone Conversation)

The IEB examinations provide an external standard by which learners, teachers and the employers who pay for the classes measure their success. Course materials need to promise success with regard to examinations in order to be seen as acceptable.

> I attended the IEB course at CEP, where they told us what they are putting into the exams and I discovered that the subjects I am covering is what they are putting into the exams, so these ELP books are relevant. ... The Teachers' Guide should say which are the most important chapters that are in line with the IEB, so we as teachers know what to concentrate on. Also, it would help to make the tests in the workbooks more like the exams of the IEB. (Elizabeth)

I will come back to the pressures that exams create on the use of course materials later in this chapter.

The other contextual factor was the legitimacy of the organisation that recommended the books, as well as the process by which it was decided to use these books. Teachers wanted to have a sense of control and choice.

> I like the books, I chose them at CEP from the range of books on the market. I chose CEP as a support agency because they do not have their own course, so they are not biased and they don't try to persuade you. (Elizabeth)
> I chose the books with Frans, the other tutor. CEP sent us a list of books (in the ELP course) and we went through the list together. (Thomas)

Richard and Selina, by contrast, did not have a choice. The ABET committees at their workplaces had settled on CEP as a support agency before they were employed. I got the impression that Richard had looked at other courses in the CEP library and decided that he liked the ELP course best anyway. And in the interview he described how he chose, mixed and matched the various books according to his ideas and the learners' responses. Selina, on the other hand, seemed put out at not having had a choice. She felt pressurised to "do things straight". At the time of the interview, she was playing with the possibility of changing to another support agency and course. It is now months later and she has not done that - but the

point I am trying to make is that the sense of having made an informed choice is an important ingredient in teachers' acceptance of the course they are using.

In short, teachers were unanimous in wanting textbooks as a guide, they wanted the freedom to choose their own textbooks, they liked the ELP course because it was relevant to learners, empowering and interactive, and they wanted a course that would enable success in the IEB examinations.

5.3.2 "I take what is most important and I concentrate on that"

(Elizabeth Mokgata)

In this section I outline teachers' conceptions of knowledge, and then go on to look at how these perceptions influenced teachers' use of the ELP course. At times, the Course fitted exactly with teachers' conceptions and they simply added their voices to it. At other times, they disagreed with aspects of the text and found different ways to handle that disagreement. And occasionally there was a mismatch between the Course's intentions and the teacher's conception.

5.3.2.1 Teachers' Conceptions of Knowledge

I tried to get some understanding of what the nature of each teacher's filter was by analysing what they said or implied about knowledge in this context of basic education for adults. See Table 1: Teachers' Conceptions of Knowledge.

All the teachers emphasised that knowledge must be relevant to the daily life experience of adults. They all mentioned the importance of English; yet while Joseph put a lot of energy into English grammar, the others were more focused on meaning and fluency. All said that literacy skills are valuable; but they emphasised different aspects of literacy, some focusing on lower level skills like letter formation, others on higher level skills like referencing. There was no doubt in anybody's mind that the knowledge taught must be in line with what is officially recognised. (Although I wonder what teachers would have done if the criteria of relevance had clashed with what was officially recognised.)

Table 1: Teachers' Conceptions of Knowledge

	Elizabeth	**Joseph**	**Selina**	**Richard**	**Thomas**
Knowledge must be relevant	"books must fit learners' daily life experience", "people must become self-sufficient", "understand and use this knowledge to your advantage"	"books are helpful, e.g. to sort out payslips, to write letters"	"books are useful & interesting because of lifeskills", "learners must learn to express themselves", " be able to do things without needing to ask for help"	"books contain role-plays which enable learners & are fun", "books use realistic, strong language which is good for self-assertion", NB to use real objects for teaching"	"the books make learners interested, deal with everyday life & jobs" "workers need to understand their rights and are attending these lessons to solve their problems"
The need for English	"people must develop confidence in speaking English, they need it for further courses"	"everything is in English, in town and at work", "remember your present, past & future tenses", "remember your first, second, & third persons", "without grammar you can't learn"	"learners must be able to speak English freely", "be able to communicate & know their work"	he does English vocabulary building, checks the context & meaning of questions, checks the meaning of stories	"they want English so they can talk with English managers & read newspapers", he tells learners: "don't say 'ja' without understanding"
The value of literacy	"learn to read for yourselves, learn to use dictionaries"	"write properly and fast", "I decided to start with spelling", "you must know the alphabet, capitals & small letters", "put proper spaces between words"	"alphabet and handwriting lay the foundation", "learners must read everything, especially magazines and newspapers"	he teaches referral to text to find answers, he checks punctuation and spelling only after the content is correct, he enables visual literacy	he tells learners: "you read to understand", "you read and write to uplift yourselves"
Knowledge must be officially recognised	"books should be in line with the IEB", "people need professional qualifications"	"certificates must be fully recognised"	"we enter learners for the IEB exams because they want a certificate"	"level 4 is the basic requirement that learners should reach"	"we are still waiting to identify the exam"

	Elizabeth	Joseph	Selina	Richard	Thomas
Knowledge is located in experts		he refers to me often: "What do you think? Do you agree?"			
Knowledge is located in books	she works with and finishes each book in the course	"it is important to learn what is in the book"	she follows the books page by page "I want learners to take everything"	" better to have a book to work with", "learners don't worry about difficult words on real objects but worry when they find difficult words in books", "books should not be a crutch or a syllabus"	"say thank you to this book for telling us that"
Knowledge is culturally determined				"what did you learn from your parents? and from Sunday school?"	"it is not only you and me who don't understand English words but also the white man who does not understand Zulu words"
Acquiring knowledge is ongoing	she is studying through UNISA	is studying by correspondence	she is studying through UNISA	talks about what he is learning from teaching, acknowledges own errors to learners	he acknowledges own learning: "I don't know - I find it just like that"
Knowledge is located in learners	allows time for discussions, encourages learners' opinions & life experiences, draws on learners' roles in recent history		she encourages discussions, and gives time for learners to teach each other	"what you think is what matters", "read aloud to hear your own mistakes", regular homework conveys sense that knowledge needs time &	he accepts learners reasons as valid: "you were right"

				effort	

They all saw the books as an important source of knowledge, and Richard managed to teach in such a way that learners treated the knowledge in the books as both valuable and open to critique. Richard and Thomas were very aware of how relative and culturally determined knowledge is and that it is important to recognise knowledge acquired outside of "white" society and schools. All of them talked about their own ongoing learning, but Richard and Thomas were the most easy about making mistakes and letting learners see how they too were learning in the classroom. Most of them actively used learners' life experience and knowledge as part of the learning process.

In many ways their conceptions of knowledge fitted with the conception embedded in the ELP course: that knowledge must be relevant and skills useful, that learners have valuable knowledge and experience that needs to be drawn on, that language and literacy have a communicative purpose. This fit might be overemphasised because they were talking about and working with this particular course and thus were influenced by its conception, i.e. they might have talked differently in response to another course. Anyway, the fit was not perfect, as will be illustrated later.

Looking at teachers' conceptions of knowledge through the lens of the three knowledge constitutive paradigms, I found the following. Elizabeth's conception was evenly divided between technical and practical notions, with some space for the emancipatory in learner discussions. Joseph was talking primarily in technical terms with some allowance for the everyday practicality of the books. Selina and Richard were grounded in practical notions, with respect for technical foundation skills and the beginnings of the emancipatory interest in group-work and discussions. Thomas too was grounded in the practical, but with a stronger leaning towards social emancipation.

Looking in general at the interview responses and lessons of the teachers through the lens of Pratt's conceptions of teaching, it is also possible to recognise their dominant conceptions of teaching. Elizabeth and Selina both exhibited a nurturing conception - they were concerned for their learners' growth. Joseph moved between a nurturing and a transmission conception - he worked with learners individually, yet gave out a clear sense of learners needing to imbibe a set body on knowledge. Richard was closest to a developmental conception - he challenged learners to give reasons for their answers. Thomas was closest to a social reform conception - he was driven by the ideal of 'understanding' at the workplace.

5.3.2.2 Adding Their Voices to the Course

As Polanyi says, when we are learning from an authority, we both submit to its knowledge and we "somewhat modify the existing usage" (p208). Teachers have their own authority which interacts with that of the Course.

In the interviews, all expressed similar sentiments to Elizabeth: "I take what is important and I concentrate on that". Joseph said: "I read these books and I follow the instructions and I add some things." Richard: "I follow the books page by page and supplement wherever appropriate." Thomas: "I follow the books page by page. Maybe I skip one or two things, maybe if I think that one is not so important." Only Selina was not explicitly selective: "I follow the books page by page .. I prefer the learners to take everything." (See appendix 5 for a comparison between activities in the workbook and activities in the classroom.)

In analysing the observations I got a sense of what it was teachers considered important. Although generally teachers followed the sequence of the current workbook, they selected and emphasised what they thought important. They inevitably spent more time and offered more explanations on some things rather than others. To some extent this was affected by learners' responses, but I think it also reflected what they considered to be valid knowledge or an appropriate way to teach.

For example, Richard and Joseph had very different approaches to the teaching of literacy skills. Richard spent most of his time on comprehension. He asked many questions about the meaning of texts and pictures. He was not satisfied with one-word answers, but asked learners to expand, to make connections and give reasons. He referred learners back to the paragraph or the sentence in the story where they could find the answer. He encouraged learners to page backwards and forwards in their books, looking for words and ideas they needed. When correcting written answers, he pointed out the difference between an answer that was generally true and an answer that was correct in terms of the particular question asked. He corrected spelling, punctuation and grammar only for those learners who had all their content correct. Joseph spent a lot of time on spelling and dictation. He dictated words and sentences and encouraged learners to dictate to each other. He insisted that learners spell everything they write totally correctly. He constantly reminded learners where to put capitals, how to form letters and which grammar rule to follow. It seemed to me that Richard had a concept of literacy that involved paragraphs, meaning and referral

skills, whereas Joseph was working at the level of letters, words, and rules. Because Richard had a more encompassing perception of the practice of literacy, he was able to impart more advanced literacy skills to his learners, even though they were at the same level as Joseph's learners.

Another interesting example was what teachers selected as important in response to discussion topics. It is probably my own gender bias that made me notice, but it seemed to me that the women teachers gravitated towards more personal, relationship oriented topics than the men teachers. Birthdays, gifts, older men with young lovers, menstruation and paying for women came up in Selina and Elizabeth's classes, whereas the men teachers picked up on work issues, the death penalty or changing customs. I did not see two teachers using the same book, so I have no direct comparison and anyway, it is a tendency, not an absolute statement. But I was alerted to the gender difference in one of Richard's lessons when a woman learner asked about white men attending the birth of their children. Richard diverted the discussion into whether or not it was a good thing to give birth in hospital. Chances are, that question would not even have come up in Thomas or Joseph's classes, whereas Selina and Elizabeth would have confronted it head on - as I could not stop myself from doing.

A classic example is the difference between Selina's and Joseph's approach to the grammar workbooks. Selina believed that the purpose of ABET classes was for learners to gain life skills, "for them to be able to present themselves wherever they are and to speak freely .. without needing to ask for help". So she commented very favourably on the communicative aspect of the grammar workbook: "The best thing about *Introduction to English Grammar* are the discussions. Learners must work in pairs, in groups and must go around asking for information from other learners. It makes them talk and they love it so much. .. That is why they are so fluent now" (Interview). Joseph on the other hand believed that "Grammar helps you become better, not fluent, but better", so he photocopied the grammar summary pages saying: "I choose pages which are important, like sentences with missing words to fill in" (Interview). They were working with the same books, but the way in which they added their voices created a focus on very different aspects.

Another area where the teacher's voices were noticeable was in the teaching of English language. For example, Joseph explained the meaning of every word in the text and got learners to practice their pronunciation. Elizabeth explained practically no words and waited for learners to ask what

they did not understand. Richard explained those words that learners stumbled over while reading, or words that they could not explain when he asked. These different ways of teaching arise from different conceptions of how best to learn English.

What follows is an example of Thomas adding his voice to the Course, to the benefit of the learners. He was using *English at Work* which perfectly fitted his conception of relevant, job related English learning. Thomas co-operated with the text in such a way that his and his learners' authority was able to emerge. For example:

> T: What do they say we must do?
> He reads the instructions: 'Work in pairs. Make up questions for Zanele.'
>
> He asks the learners to give possible questions that Zanele can ask. Learners call out a question, he evaluates it and writes the question on the board. Learners want to start writing immediately, but the teacher stops them: "Don't write. Let's do the exercise first. There are no answers here. Let's use our own minds to find out what she is saying."
>
> They go through all the possible questions, with learners calling out their ideas. The teacher pulls what they say together into questions that he writes on the board.
>
> In the end, these are the sentences on the board:
> Where must I deliver the boxes?
> How can I get there?
> When must I start delivery?
> What must I deliver first?
> Who must I contact?
>
> Learners copy them into their books.
> (Observation 1, *English at Work*, p17)

Thomas did not follow the instruction about working in pairs, instead changing it into a whole group exercise. Nevertheless, he used the exercise in such a way that learners could create the English they needed and watch their ideas take shape on the board. Working within the intention of the book, he used his own authority to strengthen that of the learners.

The examples illustrate how the authority of the teacher and the authority of the text become intertwined with each other. The text provides the guidance, the teacher provides the emphasis and together they open up the knowledge and skills of the practice to learners.

5.3.2.3 Disagreeing with the Course

Comparing teacher's conceptions of knowledge in the previous section with the aims of the ELP course in chapter 2, it would seem that on the whole, the fit is good. Life skills, communicative English, literacy development, respect for learners' knowledge, lifelong learning - these are all concepts that the teachers and the Course have in common. Yet there cannot always be a perfect fit between a teacher's conception of knowledge and that of a course (or course writers). At some point teachers will disagree with the knowledge or the methodology presented in the course. So what happens then?

I would like to begin this illustration with an example taken from a teacher training course for ABET teachers at City Deep in June 1996.

> A trainee teacher was asked to micro teach the introduction to *Reading Stories*. The introduction asks and answers the question: What is a good reader? Among other things, the book says "Good readers guess at words they do not know. If they get to a word they do not understand, they don't stop. They keep reading." In response to a question from a 'learner', the trainee teacher said that if learners found a word they did not know, they should stop reading and look the word up in a dictionary. When the 'learner' queried her response by referring to the text, she ignored him and moved the 'class' on to the next piece of reading.
>
> During the feedback afterwards, I pointed out that she had disagreed with the book. I went on to say that was fine, as long as she pointed out to learners that she disagreed with the advice of the book, so that learners did not get confused. In response, the trainee teacher vehemently denied that she disagreed with the book - she did not notice and refused to accept that there was any difference between what she said and what the textbook said.
> (Notes on City Deep training course)

Here was a situation where the teacher had no confidence (micro-teaching is always nerve-wracking and she had no previous teaching experience) and the textbook was in a position of authority (the whole training revolved around how to teach using the ELP course). In addition, it is likely that her own educational background in DET schools did not encourage the ability to question the authority of a textbook or even to look at texts carefully and ask herself whether she agreed with them or not. The result was that she could not place her own knowledge in relation to the text. She felt unable to challenge the authority of the text and she avoided the conflict by pretending it did not exist. She and her learners lost the opportunity of discussing the relative merits of guessing at the meaning of words or looking them up in a dictionary.

All of the teachers I observed were trained and experienced, with varying degrees of confidence and authority in the practice of teaching. So they had more varied strategies for dealing with their disagreements.

When Elizabeth found herself in a situation of disagreeing with the text, she dealt with it by touching on the matter superficially and then moving on as quickly as possible. The particular text in question was a story, "How May Day Changed to a Public Holiday" at the end of *Make a Date*. This is what happened:

> The teacher reads the story of "How May Day Changed to a Public Holiday", with learners following in their books. She reads it paragraph by paragraph. After each paragraph she stops, repeats it in her own words and elaborates, to ensure that learners understand. When she reads about workers taking 2 days off in 1988, she laughs, sympathising with the government because they were "getting tired of the people toyi toying".
>
> She then asks comprehension questions to check if learners understand the story:
> T: Where did May Day start?
> S: In America
> T: Why?
> S: They were looking for less hours.
> T: How many hours did they want to work?
> S: 8 hours
> T: Who said people in SA can stay away, stay home on May Day?
> Sts: .... silence
> T: Who said 1st May is a holiday?
> Sts: .... silence
> T: Who said: you can have this day, I am tired of people toyi toying?
> S: PW Botha
> T: At least now you know the story of May Day.
> We have come to the end of this book. Tonight you revise. Tomorrow you write a test.
> (Observation 4, *Make A Date*, p50)

She wanted to finish the book in that lesson, but I think the main reason for dealing with the story in such a cursory fashion is a contextual problem, namely, her complicated position between union and management. Outside of the classroom, as a staff member in the Human Resources department, Elizabeth is a member of management. She has a stormy relationship with the union in that factory:

> It is more difficult with the union. They don't trust me, because I am part of management. For example, learners collected money to buy dictionaries. I bought them from CEP, showed them to learners, but then left them in the cupboard until the time was right to teach learners how to use them. The chairperson of the union committee then came to me, threatening to have me fired because I had misappropriated the learners'

> money. She calmed down when I showed her all the books in the cupboard in the classroom. But even now, she is forever trying to turn my learners against me. (Interview)

All the learners in her class are union members. Elizabeth is a teacher who cares for her learners - she deals with their eye problems, organises flowers when they are sick, responds to their questions and delivers a good service in terms of their learning - 9 out of the 14 learners passed the June 1996 IEB exams with a merit. So she did not want alienate her learners, did not want to remind them of the union-management conflict raging outside of the classroom. That made it difficult for her to deal with a story about the history of struggle between union and government over May Day. The story takes up a whole page and she had been working through the book steadily, so she could not just ignore the page. Anyway, learners were likely to be interested in the topic. She solved the problem by paying the passage cursory attention only: doing most of the talking, asking only a few questions and then moving on. There was no discussion, no space for learner opinion, no question about whether the learners were part of any of those struggles and could remember what happened - all of which she had done quite easily on the previous page when the subject was June 16 and Sharpeville day. Elizabeth simply weakened the potential impact of the text by using her authority to stand between the text and the learners.

Richard avoided emotional issues in a similar way when a text in *Reading Stories* dealt with the memories of falling in love for the first time. A follow up exercise was for learners to write their own stories. Most learners were reluctant to write - it was the first time they had to write a whole story and it was a difficult task. Only one or two of them did. When Richard looked at their stories, he discovered that they had extended (?misunderstood) the subject to memories of making love for the first time. Richard decided he did not want to deal with that in class - he moved on, leaving the practice of story writing for some other time.

The above anecdotes are also examples of how directly the ELP course relates to the lives of learners and teachers. Normally, I have portrayed that quality as the Course's strength, in that the learning is meaningful and makes a link to the context outside the classroom. It can though, as in these cases, become a weakness of the Course, because teachers are not equipped to deal with the complicated and powerful emotions that can arise.

Selina's moment of disagreement with the book came over a methodological issue. All of the workbooks start with an exercise for learners to evaluate their own skills in relation to the skills that will be taught in the book, with the aim of deciding whether they have something to learn from the book or whether it is too easy. In the grammar workbooks, this self evaluation takes the form of a passage which learners must gap-fill using the correct grammatical form of verbs given in a box. Then learners check their answers against answers given at the back of the book or upside down on the same page, count their marks, and if they get full marks their knowledge of grammar is good enough for them not to need to work through the book. Selina changed it into an ordinary teaching exercise:

T: What do you see on the picture?

Sts: a woman, 2 children, a TV, one man, books, flowers, pictures on the wall, a dog, a sofa.
(There was no talk about what is happening on the picture or who the people might be. Also, no link was made between the picture and the text that follows.)

T: Reading: 'Discuss: This test will help you see if you need to learn from this book. If you do not get 8 out of 8, you can work through this book to improve your grammar.' Speaking: Is anybody still writing or did you finish yesterday?
One learner asked for clarification. She did so with him individually.

T: Reading: 'Fill in the missing words: Choose the correct words from the box.'
Then she read the words in the box, then read the story.
At each gap she paused and learners called out the word in chorus. The vocal learners had the words all right, except for the last one, where they said "watching" instead of "is watching", but the teacher did not pick up on that.

T: Tell me, there are so many words in the box, but we only use 8 words for the story. They give us three and we must choose one. Now discuss with your partner and see if you did get the answers correct.
Learners worked in pairs to check their work.
Then the teacher repeated the reading of the story, with the learners calling out the missing words.
(There was no reference to checking the answers against p58, no counting up of marks and no mention of the purpose of this exercise as determining whether or not to work through this book.)

(Observation 3, *Present Tense*, p0)

When I asked Selina why she did not show learners how to check their own answers, she said: "I didn't show them as I don't want them to look up answers instead of thinking." She feared that learners would look at the answers before they engaged with the questions on their own. Coming from the position of a schoolteacher, she viewed checking answers as a way of cheating, rather than a reference skill. Although Selina was explicit about disagreeing with the text when talking to me, she did not want to engage the learners in the matter. When, a few pages later, a learner asked about the meaning of the upside down words, she responded curtly: "They are answers.

Good luck to you" and moved on to the next thing. Selina did not explore this disagreement with the text. She wanted learners to think for themselves, yet ironically she blocked off any thinking about self-checking mechanisms. She did not feel confident enough to confront learners with the difference between her opinion and the methodology of the book. Instead, she side-stepped the authority of the book and thus lost an opportunity to increase the authority of her learners to formulate their own judgements.

Richard seemed to confront his differences with the book in an easy, relaxed way. An example, taken from the introduction to *Money and Shopping:*

> The teacher elicits the contents of the first picture (three women looking at the prices on packets in a meat counter) and asks a learner to read what one woman is saying: "Everything is so expensive, it finishes me". He picks up on "it finishes me", and explains: "This is not actually good English, but it is okay to talk like this to friends. It is a way of talking, but we don't usually write like this".
> (Observation 2, *Money and Shopping,* p1)

He is perfectly correct - the course writers were using quotes from learners in this introduction, so the English is "African" rather than "Queen's". Richard obviously thought that this particular sentence was overstepping the mark of acceptability and wanted his learners to note that, so they would not use it as a model. But the way in which he critiqued the language of the book, making the distinction between spoken, casual language and written language, clarified things for learners without undermining the authority of the book. This manner also empowered the learners to critique the book in their own right. For example, Richard's learners noticed an inconsistency between the photo and the story:

> T: What does the woman have in her hand?
> Sts: Mageu.
> S: It is not sour milk, like in the story.
> Me: What is the difference between sour milk and Mageu?
> S: Mageu is not sour milk, it is soft mielie porridge.
> (Observation 3, *Money and Shopping*, p11)

Because Richard treated the book as an authority that could be disagreed with, the learners too were able to point out mistakes without losing their respect for the book as a whole.

Thinking about how Elizabeth and Selina struggled to balance the conflicting demands of their own ideas, the text's guidance and their learners' responses, I realise that teaching, particularly teaching adults, means taking risks - risking one's own ideas and opinions about life, risking one's

conceptions of what makes for good learning and teaching. It is important to make explicit what is just beneath the surface, to open up issues so they can be thought about clearly. The issues can be ones of language, literacy, learning strategies, or everyday social and work life. It does not seem to matter whether learners and teachers agree with each other and the text, what matters is increasing clarity, or, to use the Freirean term, raising consciousness.

I want to posit that the underlying issue is one of confidence and authority in the practice. How confident do teachers feel about their ability to teach? How knowledgeable are they about approaches to language and literacy teaching? How do they see the relationship between their own authority and that of the textbook? The more confident and the more knowledgeable teachers are, the more they will be able to simultaneously acknowledge and openly question the authority of the text.

5.3.2.4 Misunderstanding the Course

The ELP workbooks are sequenced, ensuring a build-up of knowledge and skills. Taking selections out of the middle of the workbooks thus needs careful consideration with regard to the skills that have been developed and assumed so far. When teachers select only those sections of a workbook that seem to fit their conceptions, without due consideration for what came before, it can result in confusion for learners.

Joseph's choice of grammar lessons illustrates such a case. Joseph placed a high value on grammar as part of English learning. "Without grammar, you can't learn" he insisted. He admitted that grammar does not help with fluency, but that did not detract from its importance: "Grammar helps you become better, not fluent, but better". He approved of the ELP course having a few workbooks focused exclusively on grammar: "Before, I was using *Survival* only. Now with these ELP books, we do grammar". He asked several times when *The Future* was finally going to be available and suggested that the "past participle" be added when ELP repackaged its course. During lessons he often told learners to "remember your first, second and third persons", or "your singulars and plurals".

By contrast, the ELP course is primarily concerned with communicative fluency, with functional language use and life-skills. The four grammar workbooks are an addition to satisfy learners' demands for accurate English. They were written from within a paradigm of "grammatical consciousness-raising" (Witthaus, 1993) which assumes that learners can already speak English for communicative purposes and are ready to embark on more abstract learning and discover the structures of the language. The methodology of the books "presents new linguistic structures in a meaningful context" (p237), "encourages learners to discover grammatical patterns" (p237), introduces "comparisons between the ways ideas are expressed in English and in learners' mother tongues" (p238), is communicative, so that learners "make grammatical decisions in a context" (p238), and uses humorous comics to lighten the learning (p239). There are a few pages of grammar summaries at the end of each book and in some chapters where "learners can check their hypotheses" (p237).

So although the workbooks fulfil Joseph's expectation of grammar teaching, they do so from within a communicative framework that does not fit his conception of grammar as rules. The workbooks attempt to improve learners' English through reflection on grammar, whereas Joseph's more traditional expectation is to teach English through the medium of grammar.

In addition, Joseph was working within a contextual constraint: learners did not have their own copies of *Present Tense* and *Past Tense.* The mine had bought only two ELP workbooks, followed by two EFA books for the level 2 class. (That has been changed for his current level 2 class, who have their own copies of six ELP workbooks.) Photocopying was expensive and administratively tedious. Joseph photocopied and used only those pages he thought were essential. So what did he select?

> During the first day of observation, he used *Present Tense* page 42, a summary of the structure of the present continuous tense. On the second day, he used *Past Tense* page 8, a summary of the simple past tense with the verb "to be", and page 9, a general knowledge quiz requiring learners to fill in "was" or "were" before answering the questions. When I asked whether he had used any other pages prior to the observations, he said yes, namely *Past Tense* pages 48-49, which are lists of regular and irregular verbs in the simple past tense. All the pages he chose are summaries, taken in isolation from the preceding chapters which presented, discussed and practised the structures.
>
> Both lessons followed this format:
> -The teacher handed out the photocopies.
> -He checked that learners understood they needed to fill in the gaps and he explained some of the vocabulary (e.g. negative, positive, question, we, they, beach, employer).

-He worked through a few examples: he read a sentence while learners called out the missing words.
-The learners worked through the pages in their own.
-When learners were finished, (after 30 and 50 minutes respectively), the marking began. In the first lesson, the teacher asked the learners to swap sheets and correct each others work, while he went through all the answers with the whole group. Then he collected the sheets to mark them himself. In the second lesson, he simply collected the sheets to mark them himself.
-I looked over their shoulders to see what the learners had written and noticed that, particularly in the past tense exercise, most of their answers were wrong: they had filled in "was" regardless of singular or plural and none had formed the questions correctly.
(Extracted from observation notes from Day 1 & Day 2)

It is both what Joseph did and what he did not do that explains why learners took so long to fill in only a few sentences and why most of their answers were wrong. He took a page which the workbook intended as a summary or revision and changed its purpose to that of a teaching exercise. But then he did not teach: he did not present the grammar in context, he gave learners no chance to practice it communicatively, he gave learners no principles by which to decide on the correct answer, he never explained why answers were wrong. For learners, the exercises became simply a process of random guessing, rather than one of making informed decisions.

Had Joseph followed the sequence of the workbook, it would have done that teaching for him, or at least have guided him in how to do it. But because he used isolated sections without understanding the logic of the book as a whole, he ended up confusing learners and creating the opposite of what the book was trying to achieve.

This anecdote is not meant to make a statement about Joseph's teaching. During my observations he was working systematically through the EFA course-book he was using at the time. He probably selected pages from the ELP workbooks to do me a favour because he knew I had come to observe the ELP course in use. The point I am trying to illustrate is that taking selections from textbooks and cobbling them together into a learning programme can be fraught with difficulties. Each textbook has a developmental logic of a particular kind, and a particular conception of knowledge and methodology which can fit, not fit or only seemingly fit the teacher's conception. When teachers make selections from a textbook, they need to do so with a clear sense of what it is they want to teach, and a clear sense of what the text they select is trying to do and where it fits in to their purpose.

It is a valuable principle for teachers use textbooks in such a way that they "take what is important and concentrate on that". In a classroom setting, the authority of a textbook should not be above the authority of the teacher. But the conception and the logic of the textbook need to be recognised and understood, so that the teacher and the textbook can work in harmony to the benefit of the learners. If the text is used in a confused way, both the authority of the text and the authority of the teacher are undermined.

To summarise: Unlike the findings in Marshall's Mozambican study, the ELP course generally fitted with teacher's conception of knowledge and what makes for good teaching. Teachers had sufficient confidence and knowledge in the practice of language and literacy teaching to follow the Course without difficulty. When the relationship between teacher and text was in harmony, teachers both added their voice to the authority of the text and used the text to enhance their own and their learners' authority. When teachers disagreed with the Course, they tended to gloss over the differences rather than open them up for discussion, except when they were feeling very confident. Selecting sections of the Course was problematic when teachers did not know the Course well enough to understand its sequencing of knowledge and skill as well as its methodology. What teachers drew out of the ELP course depended on their prior conceptions of teaching English and their confidence as teachers.

5.3.3 "One can't have ideal materials"

(Richard Worthington)

There are several ways to understand this statement. One is that is it not possible to have ideal materials because it is not possible to create the perfect text. All textbooks at some point will contain an error or unclarity. Looking at the ELP workbooks again through the eyes of teachers and learners, I was not spared the ear tingling embarrassment of seeing typing errors (*Reading Stories, p14),* unclear instructions (*English at Work,* p19), unclear pictures (*Introduction to English Grammar,* p52) and even conceptual fuzziness that caused confusion (*Money and Shopping*, p12-15).

Another way to understand the statement is that no materials can be ideal for all situations. Even the best courses are limited to a particular level and kind of target audience. The ELP course works

for urban and semi-urban adults who hear English in their environment and who can already read and write in their own language. If it were used in a rural setting with illiterate learners, it would not be conducive to learning.

A third way to explore the truth of the statement is the way in which Richard himself meant it: "One can't have ideal materials because learners (in the same class) have different needs and are working at different levels". Teachers will always need to adapt and scaffold the text for their particular learners.

5.3.3.1 The Need for Scaffolding

At ABET levels, where learners are real newcomers to the process of formal learning, all texts, even the most appropriate ones, need to be mediated for learners. All the teachers said they needed to give 'additional explanations'. As Joseph explained: "It is their first time to learn English. For the first month, I had to explain everything in detail. Presently I just explain here and there." The teachers needed to scaffold the gap between learners' current ability and the skills required to complete the tasks set by the workbooks. As discussed in more detail in chapter 4, scaffolding is the support provided by teachers which enables learners to accomplish a task while simultaneously learning how to do more of it themselves next time. A teacher is responsible for the "strategic interventions" (Mercer, p101) which ensure that a text becomes appropriate to the particular needs of particular learners.

What follows is an extract from Richard's teaching as an example of scaffolding which enables learners to accomplish a task by stretching their ability to the limits. Richard engaged in a three-way conversation between the learners, the text and himself. All three players were imbued with authority: the text was the authority to follow, Richard took on the authority to mediate and adapt, and the learners gained authority through the opportunity to measure themselves against the challenge.

T: This is a bit more difficult. They don't just want a word, but a whole sentence, so remember to put capitals and full stops. Let's read the questions.
S: reads: In the old days, what happened when a child was born?
T: says: In the old days, what happened when a child was born?
Sts: the people came to visit, child introduced to ancestors

T: Anything else?
S: family came together
T: Okay, question 2,

Questions 2-3 follow the same pattern. The teacher reminds the class that they must answer only what it says in the story. For questions 4-6 the teacher does not repeat the questions, i.e. one learners reads the question and the others answer.

T: Write the answers now, and write complete sentences.
S: Ooh, I write so slowly. And it is late. (It's 10 to 6.)
T: No, start now. Last time I gave something like this for homework, some people did it and some didn't and now I want to make sure you do it. If you do it now, I am here and you can still ask me.

Learners work individually, ask friends for help and ask the teacher. The teacher moves around in the centre of the horse shoe, often kneeling in front of the tables, checking on each learners. The two weak learners are still on p 20 and need showing what a paragraph is and how to cross out the wrong answers. Most learners are struggling with writing full answers to questions. (It is the first time the book requires them to write such detailed answers.)

I overhear:
T: Yes, this is true, but it is not answering the question.
T: You can use your own words. You don't have to use the exact same words as in the story.
T: (to me): This is the first time we have such open-ended questions, so when I saw especially question 2 I thought we should do it in class, else they'll come back saying they didn't know what to do.

Learners sigh, work slowly, rub out, page back and forth between the story and the questions, ask each other, wipe their brows.
S: (to me): It is very hard when you are old.

The teacher corrects at different levels for each learners. For the weaker learners, he corrects content. For the stronger ones, he corrects spelling, punctuation and sentence coherence, i.e. grammar.

At one point, the teacher looks up from correcting someone's work, gets the attention of the whole class and says:
T: If you read your own sentence out loud, you can often hear your own mistakes. If you just look, you don't see the mistake so easily. If you read it out loud, your ears will help you.

At about 6.20 p.m. some learners are getting restless about time.
T: You can go. Please carry on to the end of the questions at home and please tick yes or no to the questions on p 23. All they are asking you to do is tick, it shouldn't take long.
I have another thing for you to do if you have finished the sentences. Here is a crossword. Do it when you want, we won't check it in class, but when you are finished, bring it to me and we'll check it. It is supposed to be fun, not work.
(Observation 4, *Reading Stories*, p 22)

Like Thomas, Richard referred to the course as "they", the course writers. This portrays a sense of the course as relative, as a person who can be negotiated with. It sets up a feeling of teacher and learners together embarking on the challenge set by the course writers. The task set by the workbook was to answer six comprehension questions about a story in writing. Richard had a clear sense that this task was more difficult than previous tasks the learners had completed. He gauged the task in relation to learners' existing performance ability - and judged it to be just within their "Zone of Proximal Development". He made his judgement explicit to learners: "This is a bit more difficult" and he offered his support: "Now I want to make sure you do it".

To make the task more manageable, he broke it into two: first learners answered the questions orally, and then, when the ideas were clear in their minds, they embarked on the writing. During the oral work, he scaffolded learners' ability by probing ("anything else?") and by giving the rules of this particular task ("answer only what it says in the story"). During the written work, he scaffolded in several different ways:

- He gave clear instructions (write answers now and write complete sentences);
- He clarified the expectations of the task (not words, whole sentences with capitals and full stops);
- He gave encouragement (I am here, you can still ask me);
- He enabled peer support;
- He gave advice on how to do the task (you can use your own words, if you read out loud, you can hear your own mistakes);
- He gave feedback on learners' performance (that's true, but not answering the question);
- He gave individualised feedback (different skills - understanding, spelling, grammar - depending on learner's difficulty).

For even the most appropriate textbook, the teacher needs to do a lot of work to enable learners to complete the tasks it sets. When the goal is learners learning, rather than the completion of a book, texts can be better or worse, but not 'ideal'. It requires the intervention of the teacher to scaffold the learners' ability to grow within their Zone of Proximal Development.

One form of scaffolding is the teacher giving feedback on learners' work or correcting it. The more I observed, the more I became aware of what a powerful influence correction has on the tone and quality of learning in the classroom.

5.3.3.2 The Power of Correction

A printed text cannot give learners the feedback they need to recognise and correct their errors. Feedback is an aspect of teaching totally in the control of the teacher. I did not do a time check, but looking through the transcripts, teachers spent at least half their time responding to and correcting learners' oral or written communications. The way they responded either enabled learners to do the task correctly, or blocked learners' understanding. What follows is a list of forms of correction I observed. I have grouped them according to whether they block or enable learners' development and their access to the world of English language and literacy.

Sometimes learners were undermined at an emotional level. Learners were corrected roughly, they were not praised when they got it right, were berated for getting low marks, or made to feel their errors arose from carelessness. Teachers also echoed learners' correct answers, or re-marked work that learners had already marked for each other, giving the impression that learners' words and judgements carried no weight. Sometimes learners were confused at a cognitive level. Teachers repeated learners' errors, used grammatical jargon to explain errors or simply repeated the correct answer without any explanation. Teachers also over-corrected on specific points or corrected irrelevant errors; corrected items that fell outside the focus of the lesson or did not notice learners' misunderstandings. Teachers lacked techniques for correcting effectively or the knowledge of the practice for choosing which issues were worthy of correction.

At other times teachers got it right. Learners were supported at an emotional level. Teachers praised learners, admitted their own errors, let learners correct their own work and gave them the choice of how much correction they wanted to make. Items of literacy and language were clarified for learners. Teachers elicited the meaning of words through questions, they elicited correct answers by asking several questions in a row rather than giving the answer, they confirmed answers as partially correct and then probed further. Teachers checked both meaning and pronunciation of new words, and gave reasons when an answer was wrong. Teachers also corrected differently depending on the purpose of an exercise - in a communicative exercise they corrected only for meaning, in a structured exercise they corrected for accuracy, which means that at times they ignored learners' errors. Whilst correcting, teachers sometimes provided techniques for learning and self-correction. They explained why it was important for learners to become able to work things out for themselves, they corrected individual learners differently in accordance with level of

ability, they checked that all learners agreed with an answer, they referred learners to the text to find their own answers.

At times, learners simply did not understand what was expected of them. The gap between what learners could do and what the exercise required was too wide. Then teachers could not work through correction - they took a step back and re-taught the item. As an element of scaffolding, correction was only effective when it operated provided within the learners' Zone of Proximal Development.

Teachers' judgements of whether, what, when, and how to correct presupposed a detailed understanding of both second language and literacy development. The more knowledgeable teachers were in the practice, the more able they were to choose salient items for correction. For teachers to become knowledgeable, they need to be exposed to training, which is the focus of the next section.

To summarise: at ABET levels, texts cannot stand on their own. They require the mediation of a teacher to scaffold the tasks set by the text for the learners. The manner in which teachers scaffold tasks and give feedback to learners has a powerful impact on learners' progression through the practice. As Selina said: "It is in the power of a teacher to destroy somebody for their lifetime. So it is the teacher's responsibility to give light and encouragement" (Interview). For teachers to live up to that responsibility, they need all the support they can get.

5.3.4 "Rather make users like me more advanced"

(Joseph Kameta)

One of the aims of the ELP course was to provide a guided yet open-ended learning programme for ABET classes. Setting itself up as an authority in the practice of ABE, second language and literacy teaching, it aimed to support the authority of the teacher and empower the learner. For that aim to be more fully achieved, it needs teachers who are confident and well versed in the practice. As Joseph said when I asked him how ELP could improve on the books: "It is not so important to add anything to the books, but rather to make users like me more advanced". He understood clearly that more knowledgeably skilled teachers are more able to use materials as convivial tools.

The ABET field does not invest much financial or human capacity in making teachers "more advanced". Statistics provided in *A Survey of Adult Basic Education in South Africa in the 90s* indicate that the vast majority of ABET teachers have a Std 10 as their highest qualification (p443), that less than half had some kind of ABE training (p445), that most ABE training is very brief, lasting on average less than two weeks (p446), that most ABET teachers have only between 1 and 5 years of teaching experience (p447) and are employed part-time (p450). Compared to those averages, the teachers I observed were well qualified (see the description of the teachers and their contexts). Three of them had a tertiary qualification and all of them had had two weeks or more of ABET training - a week for English and another week for mother-tongue literacy or numeracy. Although only one was employed full-time as an ABET teacher, all had steady incomes from their work and attached importance to their jobs.

Hargreaves argues that the ways teachers teach depends on: the skills they have learned, their backgrounds, their biographies, their hopes, aspirations and frustrations in their careers, and their relationships with their colleagues. (1994, p ix) In this section I want to look at the influence of teachers' educational backgrounds and the ABET training they received on their conceptions of what makes for good teaching.

5.3.4.1 The Influence of Prior Training

I was alerted to the important influence of teacher training by watching Joseph, who had a different style for teaching English and numeracy. During English lessons he stood in front of the class, lecturing and asking questions, while during numeracy lessons he sat at the back, letting learners do work on the board and asking only occasional questions. M&T Focus had trained Joseph to teach numeracy. Their constructivist approach requires teachers to take a back seat, intervening only when learners cannot solve a problem. Joseph was following that model wholeheartedly. But he did it for numeracy only. He did not transfer that learner-centred approach to his English teaching.

It seemed to me that his conception of English teaching was based on a combination of his own colonial, traditional education and the more progressive, learner-centred approach promoted by CEP. These two approaches were in conflict, which could be seen most clearly in Joseph's treatment of pronunciation. During a lesson he said to me: "I don't care about pronunciation, only

about meaning. If people say listen or lissen, it doesn't matter as long as they spell it correctly". This fitted the approach to English teaching that CEP would have promoted on their courses. But during class time, Joseph spent much energy correcting pronunciation, interrupting learners and making them repeat words several time until they got it exactly right. On the last day, in the middle of a debate on hostel life, he side-stepped into extensively drilling the difference between God \ got \ goat and sheep \ ship \ shape. I was baffled by this contradiction between his words and his actions, until he said to me in an aside: "We were playing this at school a long time ago, we were playing it the whole day." Then I understood that the memories of how he had learned as a child were stronger than the new theory learned from CEP.

Thomas too showed conflicting approaches in his teaching. On the one hand, he consistently elicited information from learners and often asked them "Why do you say so?". He got his learners thinking and working things out for themselves, in line with his reason for teaching in the first place, which was to help people understand. On the other hand, he relied a lot on chorus reading and ignored all of the book's suggestions for pair-work, during which the learners could have worked independently from the teacher. I came to understand that conflict as follows: Thomas' dealt with content in a way he had learned from union workshops, which was to elicit and ask "why" questions. But he dealt with reading (which is not a skill taught in union workshops) in ways he remembered from school, which was to chorus read. In one of my letters, I asked him what factors had most influenced his teaching: the schooling he had received as a child, the teacher training from CEP or the union seminars he had attended. He said they had all been influential and that he used whatever he needed to "deliver the correct message into my audience's minds".

Another interesting contrast was between Thomas on the one hand and Elizabeth and Selina on the other. Thomas asked "why?" questions often, Selina and Elizabeth asked "why?" maybe two or three times in all the hours I observed. I interpret this as an illustration of the different influences from union seminars and the formal school system. The school and college system, through which Selina and Elizabeth received their training, does not promote the probing and questioning that is the life blood of union work.

All of the teachers had learned a lot about teaching from CEP which superseded the traditional approach. As Selina said: "This teaching method is different from teaching children. Here, you just

help with information that the learners don't know. For the rest, you let them talk. Before, I used to stand for the whole day. Here they talk" (Interview). Richard's teaching style showed the additional influence of the professional approach to teaching EFL engendered by International House in London.

In ABET circles there is often a debate about what level of education teachers should have. Reflecting on the teachers I observed, it seems to me that the important factor was not how much but what kind of education and training the teachers had received.

5.3.4.2 The Request for In-Service Development

My questions did not enquire directly about teachers' ongoing development. Yet, from informal talk I got the impression that all of the teachers wanted to develop their skills and become more confident ABET teachers. They attended workshops at CEP whenever possible and valued the support they received. Several were studying for an ABET certificate through UNISA and some expressed interest if ELP were to run a training course for experienced teachers. As Joseph said: "I like going out on courses, to learn new things about teaching" (Interview).

To summarise: The models of teaching that teachers encountered in their lives - in their own schooling, their ABET training or other adult activities like union work - had a noticeable influence on their teaching. Teachers' desire for more training provides an opportunity for teacher development in the various aspects of teaching adults, English second language and literacy to make them more knowledgeably skilled participants in the practice of ABET.

5.3.5 "**The main thing is for learners to enjoy and to understand"**

(Selina Legong)

To round off the answer to the question about whether the ELP course qualifies as a convivial tool, I want to briefly explore the purpose of conviviality. Why does the ELP course need to be convivial? Mainly, because we have seen how influential a tool it is when teachers use it to guide learners along the path of English and literacy acquisition. So it needs to be convivial in order to

make for a particular kind of learning experience. Selina captured it well when we were saying goodbye: "The main thing is for learners to enjoy and to understand"

All of the classes I watched had moments of pure enjoyment. Learners laughed and teased the teacher and engaged intensely in what they were doing. During interviews, teachers valued their learners' enjoyment:

> In *Speak English* the most useful parts were speaking on the telephone and the last chapter, about speaking up for yourself. The learners liked the last chapter more than everything, they did a role-play and they enjoyed playing the boss very much. (Thomas)

In all of the classes learners were actively promoting their own understanding. They asked questions where they did not understand: "Is estimating and rounding off the same thing or not?" (Richard, Observation 5). "Sorry, what must we do?" (Elizabeth, Observation 2). "What is the difference between a question and a sentence?" (Selina, Observation 4). "How do you pronounce this word 'girder' - garder or gerder?" (Thomas, Observation 4). Joseph's learners even took their enquiries into the break. They tried to work out among themselves, seeing they knew that both 'was' and 'went' are in the past tense, which was correct: I went to Rustenburg, I was go to Rustenburg, I was went to Rustenburg, I was go to Rustenburg ...? (English is definitely not an easy language to learn.)

An important element in the enjoyment of learning is having a sense of progress. Noticeable improvement is the biggest incentive to continue the effort of learning. The ELP course provided that improvement. Teachers told me with pleasure about their learners' progress and increased understanding:

> All the "Talk in English" exercises made people talk. That is why they are so fluent now. (Selina)
> For the first month, I had to explain everything in detail. Presently, I explain just here and there, because they already have a little English on their brain. (Joseph)
> I can see over the months how people are getting better at finding their way around books. (Richard)

In short: One can't have ideal materials, but one can have a vision of the ideal situation: for teacher and text to co-operate in such a way that learners increase their skills in the practice while having fun.. In co-operation with teachers, the ELP course enabled both progress and enjoyment for learners.

5.3.6 Concluding Comment

To conclude the descriptions with regard to the ELP course as a convivial tool, let me briefly return to some of the questions posed by Eisner's challenge to design teaching-learning materials as 'convivial tools'. Does the ELP course provide a structure within which a teacher can operate and also stimulate options? Does it foster a sense of competence in the teacher with regard to the content? Does it not restrict what messages can be conveyed? In chapter 2, I answered these questions in the affirmative with regard to the design logic of the ELP course. This chapter has explored the answers at the level of classroom reality.

The above evidence suggests that the answer to these questions is yes. Teachers wanted and valued the Course because they experienced it as appropriate for learners. It provided a learning programme they were happy to follow whilst adding their own celebrations, pamphlets, visits to the library or additional readings. It gave them a clear sense of what teaching English and literacy in an ABET context was all about. It provided information they would not otherwise have known or had at hand. It enabled many different topics of discussion. It seems that ELP's intentions to provide a 'secure yet flexible learning programme' were successful.

I now turn to the next research question, which sought to understand how teachers used the design logic and methodology embodied by the Course.

5.4 Responses to Innovative Methodology

I will describe teachers' responses to several 'innovative' characteristics and methods that ELP embedded in the course. ELP did not invent any of the methods, but adapted them from a variety of sources as described in chapter 2. The methods are innovative in as far as other literacy courses published at the time were not using them and they were not in common use among traditional teachers in the school system. I will not describe teachers' responses to 'traditional' methods in the Course - exercises like gapfills, comprehension questions, spelling and dictation - because they fitted teachers' conceptions, were handled competently and did not contribute any research insights.

Although I outlined ELP's objectives for teachers in chapter 2, a reminder may be useful here.

> "For teachers, the course aims to provide:
> - A guideline for the content of their teaching. It is a secure yet flexible learning programme that they can work through with their learners.
> - A model for exercises and methodology. The Course teaches the teachers about teaching. It takes account of teachers' traditional expectations as well as introducing them to innovative methods of teaching. Over time, teachers learn to adapt exercises and create their own classroom materials. (of course, more skilled teachers can immediately extend and adapt the course to suit their teaching situation and style) (D&S, p193).

For this research question, I had an evaluative motive in mind. I wanted to know whether the Course was in fact successful in 'introducing teachers to innovative methods', or whether aspects of the course methodology would need to change so as to become more appropriate for teachers' conceptions.

5.4.1 The Modular Format

The intention of the modular format was that:

> Learners together with their teachers can choose which topics and which skills they want to learn. The self-assessment test at the beginning and the performance tests at the end of each module enable groups to make informed choices and to mix and match the modules appropriately. In this way learners have a greater sense of control over their own learning and teachers can design the learning programme to suit their particular constituency. (D& S, p194)

Three issues are conflated here: the question of choice between workbooks, the self-assessment at the beginning of each workbook and the performance test at the end. Let me describe what I saw in relation to each issue.

With regard to the choice and selection of books, teachers were faced with contextual problems such as the time between exams, a lack of finances, and company policies over which they had no control.

Selina and Elizabeth both wanted a course "in line with the IEB" (Elizabeth), rather than a programme for their particular constituency. They followed the route through the course recommended by CEP. But when combined with examination deadlines, this created a problem of time. The Course was not structured to fit into the six-month interval between IEB examinations,

but was meant to be worked through at learners' pace. Selina felt pressurised to work through one book a month, which she found difficult, especially since the communicative exercises like "games and role-plays ... take time".

Thomas was faced with financial constraints in the company that employed him. He could only chose three books for their English Basic 1 course and another three for their English Basic 2. For Basic 1, he used *Write On* and *Speak English,* the first two books in the ELP course, as well as *Counting,* the initial numeracy book, as recommended by CEP. For Basic 2 he chose *English at Work* and *Check Your Payslip,* with one grammar workbook *Introduction to English Grammar,* all of which come from the end of the ELP course. These choices were totally appropriate to his context. Yet from my perspective as a course writer, these choice faced Thomas with a problem of skill levels. The skills gap between *Speak English* and *English at Work* is very big. I noticed that learners found *English at Work* difficult and struggled whenever any of the activities were not fully guided.

Joseph was faced with the mining house policy to use the EFA course. He was given the first two workbooks in the ELP course and *Survival 1 &* 2 as his textbooks for the level 2 class. He had teacher's copies of the other ELP workbooks. So Joseph felt obliged to mix and match the ELP course with the EFA course, which created the problems of inappropriate selections described earlier.

Richard seemed to find his way through the maze of books. When I asked him in what order he had worked through the books, he answered:

> *Write On*, then *Speak English*, then I did *Counting* in parallel with *Speak English* and with *Read Around Town*. Then *Fill in Forms* and at that time I started *Adding* and I did some subtracting as well. Then *Reading Stories* and I am doing that in parallel with *Money and Shopping*. I won't do *Money and Shopping* in the other class, I will do *Measuring* instead. *Money and Shopping* overlaps with *Adding, Buying Wisely*, and *Measuring*. I did not do *Make a Date* as I think it is a bit thin. It is not worth the money and I would rather buy library books instead. I did the spelling of days and months and I will do some calendar work separate from the book. (Interview)

It seems that this freedom to experiment is an exception. The course structure of mixing and matching workbooks within broad bands of competencies does not work well in a context of financial constraint and exam-oriented classes.

ELP course writers had thought that the self-assessment 'What do you want to learn?' exercise at the beginning of each book would help learners and teachers choose their learning path through the course. They also meant the exercise to prepare learners for what they would encounter in the book. But teachers encountered methodological problems with this exercise.

For example, when Richard introduced *Money and Shopping*, most learners said 'I can already do this' to everything but the last chapter. As the book had already been bought for everybody in the class, it was too late to reject it. Richard had to smooth over the problem by saying: "Okay, this book is going to go fast, it will go nice and easy as you know these things already." At that point one learner gave an embarrassed giggle and said quietly to herself: "except me". (Observation 2) Richard then proceeded to work through the book quickly and superficially. He thought they knew and learners thought they knew. But when it came to a section on weights and measures, Richard assumed too much prior knowledge and the lesson slipped into confusion. Only in working through the workbook did he discover whether learners could cope with the skills or not.

Selina's reasons for not using the exercise came from a similar experience:

> I don't use the 'What do you want to learn?' pages, as I prefer the learners to take everything. With the first book, I did not know what they could or could not do, so I did not know whether they ticked correctly. Then you think this person knows this thing, but then you discover that actually, he did not understand the question. Also, others tick something just because their partners do. (Interview)

Sometimes teachers simply changed the purpose of the exercise:

> I do not do the 'What do you want to learn'? pages with learners, but I do use them for myself. They give me a clear picture of what is in the book and then I make sure that those things are covered. (Elizabeth)
>
> Because I cannot speak the languages of the learners, I found that if I did the 'What do you want to learn?' pages at the beginning of the book, I had to pre-teach those items, just so learners could understand the questions. So instead, I used them just before the test, as a form of summary or revision. (Richard)

Only Thomas used the exercise as intended:

> I use the 'What do you want to learn?' page to find out what the learners can do and what they cannot do. For example, for the job interview, most said no, they don't know how to do it. Then when I go to teach that chapter, it gives me what I must explain in detail. We also talked about how they were employed here. (Interview)

It seems though, that the complexity of clarifying the skills for learners with little English makes this a difficult exercise to manage:

> With *Write On*, I started with the alphabet (Ch 1) and I also did vowels and consonants and how to use them. Later I went back to the 'What do you want to learn?' page and asked learners what they wanted to learn. I translated the questions and asked each person individually. I asked them: on which side are you? I found that all the learners ticked the 'I want to learn this' box. I tipped them which side to tick, because it is important to learn." (Joseph)

By contrast, the tests at the end of each book were an unqualified success. All the teachers found them useful, "a checking mechanism that gives learners a sense of accomplishment" (Richard). The only suggestions were that "the tests could be more comprehensive" (Richard) and "be more like the mock exams of the IEB" (Elizabeth). The certificates that round off each module were "something for the learners to look forward to" (Elizabeth).

To summarise: The freedom to mix and match workbooks within the ELP course is not a realistic expectation in the post-policy ABET context. The self-assessment exercises are not effective tools in their present form. The tests at the end of each book are useful but need slight modification. These features impede the user-friendliness of the Course, thus making it less convivial than it could be.

5.4.2 Task-based Workbooks

> Why have we published learner workbooks rather than textbooks, when textbooks need less paper and are re-usable (i.e. cheaper)? Mainly, because we wanted learners to interact with the text and to discourage teachers from lecturing. If the book clearly indicates learner activities, then surely teachers will do them. Secondly, workbooks take the teaching load off teachers. Unskilled or scarce teachers are likely to be a key factor in national ABE provision. (D&S, p198)

The conflict between cost versus educational value of the workbook format has not changed since 1993, except that the pressure on cost has increased. In those days ELP was selling the workbooks directly, recouping only the cost of printing, thus making the books cheaper to buy than to photocopy. As described in chapter 2, political and financial pressures since then led to a partnership with a publisher, which has tripled the price.

A workbook frames the writing experience for learners by indicating where and how much they should write. In that way a workbook takes on more of the teaching responsibility than a textbook. The observations confirmed that the workbook format is an asset for learners:

- All the learners filled in their books and asked teachers to check them.
- Some learners worked at home to catch-up on lessons they had missed or to try their hand at up-coming work.
- In class, faster learners carried on to new work while they were waiting for slower learners to finish. They interacted with the text directly, without waiting for teacher mediation.
- Some learners in Elizabeth's class, who had left their workbooks at home, tried to do the work of that lesson in their exercise books. They had not even done half the exercise by the time all the other learners had completed the task.

The teachers also benefited from the format. As Thomas said: "The books are straightforward - I can see what to do". And Selina agreed: "The books make teaching easy, I don't have to write on the board. That saves time and I have more time to attend to the learners."

Getting the design of a workbook right requires a lot of attention to detail. Richard pointed out small details that confused learners - like having two lines for an answer when they expected the answer to be short, or having a space for free writing without preceding guided practice to enable them to get it right. Fortunately he also pointed out where it worked particularly well - like integrating a picture with a task or leading learners through the steps of vocabulary practice.

When I mentioned to Richard that ELP was thinking of maybe changing to a textbook format in the repackaged version, he captured the dilemma well:

> It would be a shame to go away from the workbook approach, but I can see how it might be necessary so as to keep the price down. Workbooks are the ideal format, as they mean less work for the teachers in designing worksheets, but the cost factor might make them not so practical. People like it better to have a book to work in, but financially it is a luxury. (Interview)

In short: At this level of ABET, well-designed workbooks make the steps of the writing process clearer and easier for learners and teachers alike.

5.4.3 Communicative Techniques

The ELP course gives instructions for when to use discussions, role-plays, quizzes, information gathering and other such "free" activities to encourage learners to speak English fluently. When I asked teachers whether they used these techniques, their responses were consistently positive.

Some teachers used the "free" activities as part of their work with the books:

> If the chapter advises me, I use those methods. They are good methods for adults as it makes them to be able to speak and use language freely. (Selina)
> I use the methods of discussions, role-plays and pair-work suggested in the books, but not exclusively. For example, it took a while to acclimatise learners to role-plays as they were initially embarrassing, but it is coming on slowly. (Richard)
> Yes, I use the methods in the book. I find they are working. For example, the job interview. We did it by reading here and then I said: Pretend you are employing the man. First they role-played it in Tswana, then we role-played it in English. (Thomas)

Others used them as additional activities:

> I do discussions, role-plays and pair-work towards knocking off hours when they are sleepy. Sometimes we do a debate, like: what is better, to live in the hostel or to live outside? or: is it better to drink tea or beer?" (Joseph)
> Now and then we have role-plays or pair-work. We have discussions once a week, on a topic where people have different opinions. For example, in my other class, we are discussing religion. On Wednesday they will bring in their bibles and talk. This gives shy people a chance to say things. (Elizabeth)

In the lessons I observed, more time was spent on controlled and guided activities than on "free" ones. In a few lessons, the workbooks gave instructions to 'Act out the story', which teachers ignored. I saw discussions in all the classes, and role-plays in two.

Managing the communicative, "free" exercises was not easy. Discussions tended to take the form of question \ answer, or be routed through the teacher, rather than be an exchange between learners. Role-plays were easy when used as revision, but quite threatening to learners still grappling with the English. For example, Joseph's class performed a role-play with gusto, in which the learners got up off their chairs and stood around talking in groups, pretending to be at a party meeting new people. But that role-play came from the beginning of *Speak English*, which the class had completed about a month previously. Thomas, on the other hand, tried a role-play that was part of the current learning programme. He asked pairs of learners to stand in front of the class and act out a worker \

employer interaction. Learners were prepared to get up off their chairs and perform, but they refused to act the dialogue and would only read it.

It might be that teachers stayed with guided, chair-bound activities because of my presence - learners get embarrassed to perform in front of an outsider. But even without that factor, it takes courage on the part of teachers to persuade learners into doing things that feel novel and risky. As Selina said:

> Some learners don't want to take part in role-plays and discussions, they think other learners will laugh at them. Then I must talk to them privately. (Interview)

Selina was sufficiently convinced of the value of communicative exercises to make the effort to talk to her learners 'privately'. It seems that the more comfortable a teacher is with 'free' activities, the more s\he will be able to engender enthusiasm for them in her learners.

To summarise: although teacher speak positively about 'free', communicative activities, these exercises are difficult to manage. Where workbooks indicate that they should be done, teachers usually do them and occasionally ignore them. Teachers need to be convinced of their value, else they can easily get excluded by the formality of the classroom.

5.4.4 Learner-controlled Techniques

> Pair-work is a useful technique to ensure "that each person gets practice but others do not need to listen and wait. (Teachers' Notes, *Reading Stories*, p57)
> Ask learners to get into pairs to write or discuss certain tasks. This is a safe situation to try out new language without the whole class listening. You can act as a resource person by moving from pair to pair, giving help when asked. Afterwards get each pair to report to the class on the work they have done. (Teachers' Notes, *Your Work*, p57)

Looking at the Teachers' Notes at the back of each workbook, I notice that pair-work is not particularly emphasised and is mentioned only in about half the workbooks. Inside the workbooks there are instructions which say: 'Work in pairs', 'Talk to your partner', 'Read the story to your partner', but, as I notice now, more in the later books than in the earlier ones. It seems that the course writers only gradually became aware of the need to promote pair-work. No wonder the teachers I observed did not use it much.

Richard was the only teacher who used pair-work in the sense of all the pairs talking or reading at the same time. Other teachers let the learners work in pairs or groups when they were doing a writing exercise - but that was a way of learners getting support from each other, not pairs engaging in a common task. Sometimes two learners read a dialogue for the whole class, but that is two people reading aloud, not pair-work. Even Richard did not use pair-work much - like the other teachers, he carried on with activities in a whole group regardless of the instruction to 'Work with your partner'. He even critiqued a game in *Money and Shopping*, because "all the learners respond (call out), so it is hard to tell who is first", but if the game had been played in pairs as the instructions suggest, that would not have been a problem.

Why is it that teachers are so reluctant to let learners speak and read in pairs? Unfortunately I did not ask that specifically. During the interviews, the question of pair-work was part of the question about methodologies in general. All of the teachers said they used it. So the issue is not one of conscious opposition to pair-work. I think, maybe, it is a question of control. When pairs all talk at the same time, the teacher cannot hear or correct mistakes; when pairs report back, learners are taking the initiative and the teacher listens.

A learner-controlled activity I did ask about specifically were the projects. The Teachers' Notes in *Read Around Town* explain their purpose: "Project work makes learning fun. People get a chance to bring the real world into the classroom and thus transfer learning to real life" (p57). The Teachers' Notes then carry on to show how teachers can support learners to do the projects.

Looking through learners' *Make A Date* workbooks in Elizabeth's class, I saw that none of them had filled in the projects. Elizabeth was clear that projects were not important to her:

> I don't do the projects, as the IEB only wants projects to be done at level 3. I do sometimes do little projects - I bring in flash-cards, picture cards or accounts. If learners can do it, I ask them to bring in things, like their accounts or their bank cards. I don't really do the projects in the books, which ask learners to bring in real things. (Interview)[12]

Richard was not sure whether projects were worth the struggle:

> Learners tended not to do them (the projects in *Read Around Town)*, in fact, nobody did them no matter how often I reminded them. It might have been partly because they were

[12]I had to chuckle at Elizabeth's reason for not doing projects at level 2, because I know that the team developing the level 1 and 2 exams wanted to have projects as part of the assessment. Unfortunately the IEB has found them administratively too difficult to manage.

> forgetful, but it seemed mainly that they did not want to take their book onto the street and be seen writing into it. (Interview)

The projects in *Money and Shopping,* which I observed Richard teaching, seemed to work better. About half the learners had filled in the projects on p10 and p16. But then, there was no need to go into the street to find the information as learners could find the prices and weights of groceries in their kitchen cupboards at home.

When it came to the project in *Fill in Forms,* both Richard and Selina liked the idea. They went out themselves looking for forms to bring to class, but did not ask learners to do it as the project suggested. It seems that asking learners to go to institutions to collect forms or information was expecting too much from them. The project that Thomas' class got to in *English at Work* was postponed to a later date because learners had not yet bought any exercise books.

In short: Although teachers have no objection to pair-work, they do not use the technique much in their classes. Projects require extra effort on the part of teachers and learners, which people put in only if their motivation is high.

5.4.5 Bi-lingual Teaching

The Teachers' Notes encourage teachers to use the mother tongue of the learners to translate instructions and difficult words or to have discussions from which key words can be translated into English. This strikes a balance between the traditional EFL approach that only English be used in the classroom, which can be quite alienating, and our experience of community classes where everything is said in mother tongue except a few isolated English words, which is quite ineffective. All the teachers, apart from Richard, used mother tongue in their classes. They used several languages, to cater for the various backgrounds of their learners.

During lessons, Richard let learners discuss things in mother tongue whenever they wanted to. But at times he was frustrated by the workbooks' assumption that teachers could speak the learners' languages:

> It seems that the books were designed to be used with mother tongue translations and discussions and as I cannot speak any of the learners mother tongues, some of the

> discussion questions and exercises did not work very well. Exercises like the introduction to *Write On* need a translation into mother tongue in the Teachers' Notes or somewhere. (Interview)

Elizabeth used mother tongue when English was no longer adequate. In the interview, she said: "I use mainly English in the lessons, but if individuals don't understand, I use their mother tongue - Zulu, Sotho, Venda or Ndebele." During her lessons, I saw that approach in action:

> One learner did not cope with the question: 'When did you start working in Johannesburg for the first time?' Elizabeth asked in English in three different ways and eventually she resorted to asking in Zulu. Finally the learner was able to answer, telling her he came to Johannesburg in 1971. (Observation 2)

Joseph used mother tongue as a strategy for beginner learners, a strategy which he was proud to be able to leave behind: "In the beginning, using the vernacular helped, and I spoke a mixture of English and Funagalo. But now I am trying to put that away." (Interview) He spoke only English for the three days of my observations.

Like Joseph, Selina used mother-tongue as a strategy for beginners: "In level 2 I don't use Sotho a lot, more so that one learner is white and I don't want him to feel out, unless I explain something to an individual. In level 1, I used their languages a lot." (Interview) Selina also pointed to the emotional value of using people's own language as part of the process of introducing them to a new language and culture. She counteracted the potential alienation of learning a "higher status" language by integrating and respecting all the different languages:

> I speak Sotho and Tswana. If I explain something to a Ndebele or a Tsonga person, I use his language, just to show them that I love them and that I want to explain things to them, although I am not perfect in that language. If I only use Zulu and Sotho, people with other languages feel they are not part and parcel of the class. (Interview)

Thomas was very aware that the workers were learning English so as to communicate with management. "The workers want to learn English because this is a British company, the senior bosses are English speaking people. Also, on TV most people speak English. To understand the news, they need English. They also want to read English newspapers" (Interview). So in his class, he tried to put the power of the white man's language into perspective:

> When the boss is using the big words, the main thing is, if you don't understand, you must ask the boss. It is like this story about a gardener - garden boy, but in English you say gardener - with a boss who spoke a little Zulu. At month end, the boss said to the gardener: 'Mabena, take the amakhanda (heads) of the chickens to the umlungu', when, what he actually wanted to say was: 'take the amaqanda (eggs) of the chickens to the white man'. So Mabena killed the chickens and got into trouble. So it is not only you

> and me who don't understand the English words, but also the white man who does not understand the Zulu words. So it is good to carry on learning. On page 16, they gave us the words to say if we don't understand." (Observation 1, *English at Work*, p16)

During a later lesson, a few of the learners refused to try their hand at giving accident reports in English. Yet they changed over into mother tongue several times to discuss what to do when accidents occurred at their workplace. Talking about the issue in mother tongue reminded them of their motivation for learning English: afterwards they told me how the whites discuss things behind closed doors and don't allow them to participate.

In short: bi-lingual teaching opens possibilities for making learners more comfortable in class, relativising the power of English and making the learning of English more meaningful.

5.4.6 Visual Literacy

ELP's main reason for putting many photographs and drawings into the Course was to reflect the lives of learners, as described in chapter 2. A second reason was to teach visual literacy - the ability to understand and glean information from pictures. "Before reading a story, let them look at the pictures and the title, and ask your learners what they expect the story is about", the Teachers' Notes for *Reading Stories* advise (p57).

Richard worked with each visual in the workbooks. He probed learners' responses to a picture until they could express its meaning and context. For example:

> T: What do you see in the picture?
> Sts: Woman, man, pumpkin, cabbage, street, house, potatoes.
> T: Tell me about the whole picture, not just words.
> S: A lady is selling vegetables on the street.
> T: Where is the lady selling vegetables?
> S: I think at town.
> T: Maybe. What can you see at the back?
> S: A house, fence.
> T: So are they selling from a house?
> S: No, from the street.
> One student notices the wheelbarrow in the corner of the picture, asks for the word, the teacher writes it on the board and the class practices saying the word.
> (Observation 4, *Money and Shopping*, p17)

During the interview, Richard talked about the need for visual literacy: "For example, the drawings on pages 26 and 27 of *Speaking English* lead to a lot of discussion. All that the learners can see is a person scratching her head - but what does that mean?" He then pointed to a picture in p47 of *Read Around Town* which was integrated with a writing task, and suggested that was a valuable way for workbooks to enhance visual literacy. In addition, he said: "The Teachers' Notes need to give more guidelines on how to deal with visual literacy".

Selina was teaching from the grammar workbooks, which rely heavily on visual literacy for their meaning.

> You will probably need to explain to your learners that the pictures tell a story, and that the 'talking bubbles' tell us what the people are saying. Show the learners how each bubble points to the person who is speaking. Help them to see that the same characters appear on every page of the book (Teachers' Notes, *Introduction to English Grammar*, p56).

Selina followed the suggestion of the Teachers' Notes. Her class had lively interactions about the morality of the tsotsis Joe and Tebs, expressed their envious admiration of the money earned by the shebeen queen Sis Gertie, or tried to remember whether it was Zack the builder or Basil the musician who had been flirting with Monica the bank teller at the party. Most times Selina focused on each picture that came along and ensured that learners answered the questions in relation to the pictures. For example:

> T: (Referring to picture 6): For the answer, someone can write: I have got long hair or I have not got long hair. But now we must look at the picture. What do we see there?
> Sts: long hair
> T: So the answer is: I have got long hair.
> (Observation 4, *Introduction to English Grammar*, p52)

Occasionally she forgot to do it, as with the first two pages of *Present Tense*. That led to learners ignoring the pictures as well. In all the lessons I observed, learners did not engage with the pictures unless specifically directed to do so by the teachers. When they did engage, learners talked in single words about the objects in the picture. Only if the teacher probed further, did learners arrive at an interpretation of the picture as a whole.

Looking through the Teachers' Notes, I discovered only the two references to pictures quoted above. Course writers took an engagement with the visuals too much for granted. Learners need

specific prompting before they engage with photos and drawings. Although the visual element of the Course is strong, the teaching aspect of visual literacy is insufficiently emphasised.

5.4.7 Concluding Comment

That brings to an end the findings with regard to teachers' responses to innovative methodology. To return to Eisner's challenges for convivial materials: Does the ELP course foster a sense of competence in the teacher with regard to pedagogical matters? Can it be used without extensive training?

Again, the answer is yes. On the whole, teachers' conception of methodology did not differ too widely from that of the Course. With only one week of training for English literacy, their training could not be called 'extensive'. They responded favourably to the methods and techniques suggested and used most of them. They learned from the Course - it reminded them to use communicative exercises they might have forgotten or been embarrassed to use on their own. It opened up discussions they might not have initiated themselves. There were some noticeable mismatches though. One was around the self-assessment exercises, the other around learner-controlled exercises. I will explore the implications of that further in chapter 6.

Looking at teachers responses to the different methods in the ELP course through the lens of the three knowledge constitutive paradigms enables an interesting discussion. Methods grounded in the technical paradigm - gapfills, substitution tables, comprehension questions - were all done. Methods grounded in the practical paradigm - role-plays, projects, quizzes, pair-work - were done more or less often, depending on the teacher's skill and conception. Methods drawn from the emancipatory paradigm - curriculum negotiation, learner self-assessment - were seen as too complicated to implement.

I now move on to the last of the three research questions: what are the contextual factors that influence how teachers use texts in the classroom?

5.5 Contextual Challenges

Earlier in the chapter, I described the constraints arising from company policy and insufficient financial resources. Those constraints directly affected the choice of which course materials teachers were working with. I now want to explore in more detail other contextual pressures which affect how teachers actually work with a text.

There were two pressures that all the teachers I observed had to contend with examinations and mixed level classes. Then there is also a contextual factor which these teachers did not have to contend with, but which became obvious when I contrasted this research with similar research done in community classes: the lack of resources.

5.5.1 Mixed Level Classes

In all the classes, the gap between the weakest and the strongest learners was large. Some learners could speak fluent English, others battled to say a few sentences. Some learners could write sentences, others battled with the spelling of simple words. Some could work through exercises on their own, others needed help from the teacher at every turn.

It is a gap that is endemic to ABET classes. Literacy interventions, whether in companies or communities, are usually small-scale. That does not allow for much differentiation and specialisation. It is difficult to find enough learners at the same level to make up a class. As Richard said:

> The learners in the class are at different levels, which is a real challenge for me. But I suppose that in a small work place it is not possible to have several classes with 2 or 3 students each. To make it financially viable, companies choose which single kind of class gives them the most benefit. So the teacher just has to cope with a diverse group. (Interview)

Selina had a similar problem. She found it hard to deal with learners' expectations. "CEP says that I have the right to change a learner into a lower or higher class, but it is so difficult to take a learner to a lower class" (Interview). This is made worse when there is no lower class in operation. How

does one tell a learner that because they are at the wrong level, be it too high or too low, that they cannot come to class at all? Coping with a mixed level class seems a preferable option.

CEP had conducted assessment tests at all the workplaces prior to classes starting. These tests grouped learners roughly into levels. But, as Elizabeth said:

> The assessment at the beginning did not give a 100% accurate result. But then the assessment is difficult, because of the skills gap between their ability to speak and their ability to write in English, and also between their literacy and numeracy skills. (Interview)

So the teachers devised a variety of strategies to cope with this situation. They asked learners to help each other, they let stronger learners move on ahead while they helped the weaker learners, they asked weaker learners to complete exercises at home.

Richard found that it "takes great self discipline not to teach for the fast learners" (Interview). He came half an hour early each lesson to do catch-up work with two weak learners in his class. During pair-work or writing exercises in class, he always spent the first half of the time helping the two weak learners and only then did he go around to all the other learners. When checking their written responses, he accepted simple answers from weaker learners while demanding more complex answers from stronger ones. He gave extra worksheets to the stronger learners. He found the workbooks an aid towards coping with the mixed level situation. In particular, *Speak English* "worked very well because of the mixed ability levels in the classes. Some students had a chance to talk a lot, other students lagged behind, but at least they had some practice at everything" (Interview).

Selina had four levels in one class: one learner should have been in a level 1 mother-tongue class, another learner had just joined and would have been better placed in the middle of a level 1 English class, three learners were part of the level 2 English class but not coping, and about 10 learners were at the appropriate level. Selina separated out the two learners who were at lower levels and gave them different workbooks to go through: one learner wrote and rewrote the final exercise from *Write On*, the other one did the test in *Write On* and then moved on to *Speak English*. She would come to their table every 10 minutes or so, to look at their work or answer any questions. With regard to the learners who were part of the class but struggling, she had tried several strategies over time. Initially she had put the weaker learners at a separate table so she could give them special attention. But she stopped that when an evaluator from CEP commented on it negatively. While I

was observing, she had one weak learner at each table, together with the stronger learners. She was hoping that "they will gain something even if they do not understand everything" (Interview). She encouraged and allowed time for the stronger learners to help the weaker ones. Yet when I looked closely at what was happening in the groups, it seemed to me that group work mainly consisted of stronger learners giving the answer to weaker ones. In addition, the stronger learners spent a lot of time waiting for the weaker learners to finish. During a phone conversation more recently, Selina said this strategy was not working either - what should she do?

The fact that the ELP course was in workbook format helped in this mixed level situation, as it gave learners some measure of independence from the teacher and from other learners. But where the gap between stronger and weaker learners was too great, the class no longer had an overlapping Zone of Proximal Development, which made it very difficult for the teacher to scaffold.

In short: mixed level classes are an inevitable feature of ABET classes. Teachers can learn and use a variety of strategies so that learners are freed to progress at different paces. Workbooks are useful in that situation as they enable a measure of self-paced learning. When the mix of levels becomes too great, teachers tend to cater for one group and lose the others.

5.5.2 The Pressure of Exams

Examinations for ABET levels 1 and 2 in communications and numeracy have been available only since November 1995. None of the teachers I observed at the beginning of 1996 had as yet put their learners through a national IEB examination. As such, the pressure was still slightly in the future. Yet already examinations were casting their long shadow forward.

Examinations are an external authority which pronounce judgement on the quality of learners' work. But they have an equally strong impact on teachers. Companies and other outsiders evaluate teachers by the performance of learners in the examinations. Teachers themselves identified with their learners' progress. When learners did well, they were delighted. For example: "My pleasure comes when I receive feedback from managers and colleagues about the improvement my learners show at work. Also, the fact that all my learners were able to pass the IEB July 1996 exams" (Elizabeth, Written Communication). When learners could not perform, teachers were

concerned. For example, Elizabeth was doing a revision check with her learners when a supervisor walked into the classroom to listen for a while. When learners fell silent and did not answer a question, the supervisor provided an answer and then left the room. Elizabeth told the learners: "Don't do that to me. You are making me a bad person" (Observation 5, Revision of *Make A Date).* When the examinations approached, teachers "did my {their} level best" (Selina, Phone Communication) to ensure that learners passed.

This might well be an expression of the nurturing conception of teaching which Pratt found to be prevalent among adult basic educators through the world. It ensures though, that examinations get taken seriously and thus have a large influence on the nature of the teaching.

The backwash effect of examinations is strong. Joseph, for example, was very keen to know everything I could tell him about the IEB - the examinations, invigilation and marking procedures. He thought examinations were important and often talked to learners about various aspects of exams. For example, after a writing exercise, he commented: "If you did not cheat or peep during this exercise, and you do the same thing during the exam in April, you will make it" (Observation, Day 1, *Present Tense*, p42). At one point a learner started telling a story: 'Sometimes I am go to Rustenburg and then I meeting a person. If I start talk, I talking English. Then I find, my English is finished'. Joseph responded to the content of the story and gave advice on how to handle the situation: 'Just talk and don't worry, even in the exams they go for meaning, so just communicate and just show that you have got something that you did not have before'" (Observation, Day 1, *Present Tense*, p42). He might well have responded differently if the IEB put out the message that accurate grammar and spelling were most important.

I mentioned earlier in the chapter how teachers saw congruence with the examination outcomes as an important legitimising factor for the selection of course materials. Here I want to give one example of how examination pressure influenced the actual use of the ELP workbooks.

Selina was very levelheaded about the value of exams. From her experience as a schoolteacher, she knew that: "sometimes people fail exams because of anxiety, not because they don't know. If they fail, that will discourage them" (Interview). She saw the overriding purpose of her classes as

> preparing learners for life skills, for them to be able to present themselves wherever they are and to speak freely and to have their own secrets without needing to ask for help. The

> exams are not so important. To me, even if a person does not know everything in the book, what is important is that the person can present himself in life. (Interview)

In 1995, she had designed her own test for learners at the end of English level 1. But for 1996, she planned to enter learners for the national IEB examination, "because learners want a certificate to show that they have passed a level" (Interview). This decision put her in a double bind. "I take about a month for each workbook. If I don't do a book a month, I won't finish in time for the exams. But it is not so easy when you do games and role-plays, because those things take time" (Interview). It became clear to me how easily games, role-plays and other communicative, learner-centred activities which help people to "present themselves in life" can simply fall away under the pressure to complete a programme of work in time for an examination.

One of Eisner's questions with regard to course materials as a convivial tool was: Do they not impose time constraints? The ELP course suggests a time span of 20 teaching hours per workbook, but does not impose how that time gets used or whether or not to exceed it. The constraint in this case is contextual. The expectation that learners enrol for examinations at regular intervals rather than when they are ready, imposes a tight, and maybe unrealistic, time constraint.

In short: the IEB examinations are having a strong backwash effect on the nature of teaching in the ABET field. They influence teachers' conception of what is important to learn, their selection of course materials and the way that course materials are treated.

5.5.3 The Value of Stability and Support

In August 1995 Gabi Witthaus conducted four lesson observations in KwaZulu Natal on behalf of ELP. She observed two community and two company classes. Her findings differed from mine in several illuminating ways. The main difference was that none of the classes followed the ELP course in a coherent way. Teachers were making random selections from the workbooks and were photocopying pages to bring to class. In some cases they had a photocopy for each learner, in other cases they had one photocopy for the front of the class. None of the learners had copies of ELP workbooks.

The reasons for this were financial constraints in the case of the community classes, a policy to use the EFA course supplemented with ELP workbooks in the case of the company classes and a common misconception that the ELP workbooks were not sequenced to make up a course. The results were lessons with confused purposes. In a lesson from *Introduction to English Grammar* neither the teacher nor the learners recognised the comic characters, making it impossible for them to answer the questions about the picture meaningfully. In a lesson from *Speak English,* fluency practice on the telephone turned into a grammar lesson. The exercise to write one's address in *Write On* became an hour-long oral drill. And the map work in *Read Around Town* was done without the preceding skills build-up and proved too difficult for learners.

By comparison, the lessons I observed were coherent and well sequenced. What were the differences in context? In the companies I visited, teachers and learners were paid to come and were provided with course books and other resources. There was sufficient commitment to set up ABET committees which could oversee the organisational details, establish a company policy and offer support where necessary. Finally, CEP's professional approach to teacher training, on-going teacher support, refresher workshops and their sound advice to companies set the classes up on a strong footing.

It seems to me that the contextual factors which contributed to coherent lessons were financial resources, professional teacher training and a clear educational policy with regard to texts.

5.6 In Conclusion

The descriptions in this chapter have illustrated the value of the ELP course as a convivial tool in English literacy classrooms. Teachers did not feel imposed on by it. It enabled a variety of discussions. They valued the Course because its content was appropriate to learners, its methodology enabled learners' progress, and its format supported learners to practise by themselves. They followed its overall learning programme and inserted additional activities into that structure. It extended their range of teaching activities and occasionally inspired them to make posters or bring in related reading texts. And where the Course came across as slightly confused or as demanding too much, they felt the freedom to ignore it.

There is another question implied in the notion of course materials as a convivial tool, namely 'What is the Course a convivial tool for?' These findings show that it is a tool with multiple purposes. For learners it is a tool in the content of learning, it enables access to English language and literacy practices. For teachers it is a tool in the methodology of teaching, it accompanies them on their path of becoming knowledgeably skilled practitioners.

The overarching question for this research report was: 'In what ways can course materials support and improve ABET teachers' ability in the classroom and what are the limits of that support?' Combining the concepts developed in the previous chapter and the findings presented here, I will analyse the issues underlying that question and present my insights with regard to possible answers in chapter 6.

Chapter 6 Reflections and Recommendations: Possibilities for ABET Teacher Development

6.1 Introduction

The fieldwork trip is over and the research journey is coming to an end. I am back at home, putting the moments of the journey into an album and reflecting on what exactly it is that I have learned. The central question with which this research report began was: In what ways can course materials support and improve ABET teachers' ability in the classroom and what are the limits of that support? To answer it, the question was subdivided into three areas of enquiry: the ELP course and the nature of convivial textbooks; the quality of teachers' interaction with the ELP course; and the impact of the ABET context on that interaction.

Chapter 1 raised the initial questions. Chapter 2 presented a theory of curriculum as contextualised social practice leading to a description of the historical context which shaped the development of ELP's curriculum practice and its product, *The ELP English Literacy Course for Adults.* Chapter 3 outlined the ethnographic research methodology used to answer the questions, proposing that thick description would enable me to observe how teachers and texts interacted with each other and to interpret those behaviours as aspects of a relationship in a dynamic context. Chapter 4 presented a range of readings which established the conceptual tools needed to more fully understand the responsibilities of teachers and textbooks in relation to each other. Chapter 5 described the findings, letting teachers' voices be heard in response to the research questions, and using the conceptual categories from chapter 4 to provide the underlying structure. In this chapter I pull the strands together so that the initial questions can be answered more richly than when they were conceptualised.

The focus of this chapter is the attempt to spell out the insights gained during the research exploration. As Winter argues, what is important are the insights that emerge for the researcher during the inquiry. What ways of seeing does the research enable and what possibilities are opened up through those new ways of seeing? Because of the qualitative, ethnographic research

methodology the insights are specific to ELP and the ABET context, but might also be illuminating to practitioners and academics working in other fields of education.

I then outline the silences that make for the limitations of this research. The chapter ends with recommendations: for ELP, for ABET teacher development, and for further research in the practice of ABET.

6.2 Insights Gained through this Research

There are three categories of insights: understandings about the nature of course materials as a convivial, authoritative tool for ABET teachers to use in the practice of English language and literacy teaching, understandings about the relationship between ABET teachers and texts, and understandings about the different roles that training and texts play in the development of teachers.

6.2.1 Regarding ABET Course Materials as Convivial Tools

With regard to conviviality I have answered the small question - whether or not the ELP course is a convivial tool as conceptualised by Eisner - affirmatively in the previous chapter. Here I want to tackle the bigger questions: What features must course materials for ABET possess if they are to become convivial tools? Are there other criteria in addition to conviviality? What are course materials convivial tools for? The answers draw on the ABET context in chapter 2, the readings in chapter 4 and the findings in chapter 5.

The conceptual frame in which I explore these questions is that of adult basic education and training as a community of educational practice. This brings to mind Lave's notion of legitimate peripheral participation: everybody involved in ABET - be it as learner, teacher, trainer, administrator, curriculum and materials developer or policy maker - is a legitimate participant who both learns from and contributes to the practice. Yet the practice of ABET is young and developing. There are struggles over power and the legitimacy of authority in the practice. There are no set career paths through which the roles and identities of people in the practice

change over time. There is no consensus over the nature of practitioner training. The curriculum framework to specify what counts as legitimate knowledge for ABET is still in process and there is no established tradition with regard to the boundaries of subjects. So it is often not clear to newcomers at any level in the practice what they are supposed to be learning and doing.

In that context, textbooks or course materials for ABET carry a central responsibility for conveying what the practice is about. By definition, a textbook sets itself up as representative of and an authority in a practice in a way that, for example, a reading text does not do. It claims to be the route learners must follow to gain access to the practice by providing progressively more difficult knowledge and skills. For newcomer teachers it is an important source of learning about the pedagogy, and maybe even the content of the practice. That authority brings with it the responsibility to represent the highest standard of knowledge that the old-timers have acquired so far, both with regard to the subject matter and the pedagogy of the practice. Of course, groups of old-timers will have differing conceptions of what exactly those standards are, but that does not eliminate the responsibility of textbooks to attain "the authority of the best standards reached so far" (MacIntyre, p177).

As described in chapter 2, the ELP course was an attempt to record the accumulated curriculum experience of a team of people who had been in the practice for over a decade. It claimed to be a trustworthy and authoritative representative of a section of the ABET practice, namely adult basic second language and literacy teaching. My view alone cannot substantiate such a claim, but the fact that the Continuing Education Programme (CEP) has chosen, after careful evaluation of everything that exists in the field, to recommend this course to their teachers, seems to indicate that other old-timers in the ABET practice judge it to be so.

The literature review and the findings clarified for me that if course materials are to have intrinsic authority, there are three stake holders to which they must be accountable: the knowledge of the practice, the learners and the teachers. (To gain extrinsic authority, materials need to be sanctioned and legitimated by the 'structural' context of ABET, an issue with which I am not concerned here.)

Course materials have a responsibility to the knowledge of the practice. The knowledge in a practice develops over time. Following Polanyi's idea that people in a practice need to submit to

its authority, whilst at the same time imposing their view on the consensus to which they submit, I would argue that course materials need to be true to whatever aspect of the tradition they are drawing on, whilst at the same time extending the tradition to its limits and beyond. So what is the tradition of knowledge in English second language literacy for ABET?

Bhola, drawing on years of adult literacy experience at UNESCO, states it clearly: the 'triangle' (p37) which integrates language and literacy skills with functional knowledge and an awareness of social issues. That takes us back to the discussion around Grundy's three paradigms for curriculum work: the technical, the practical and the emancipatory. Rather than one paradigm dominating and excluding the others, they need to be integrated into a coherent learning programme. Language and literacy are social practices which demand the mastery of skills, the ability to make judgements about the social uses of those skills, and an exploration of the emancipatory potential inherent in those skills.

For the practice of ABET second language and literacy this means that textbooks must embody a curriculum which enables learners:
- to acquire skills, in this case, English language and literacy;
- to develop the ability to reflect on and make practical judgements about the skills, in this case, to be able to use their English language and literacy to their benefit in the world outside the classroom;
- to explore the liberatory potential of the skills, in this case, to read and write passages that are personally and socially illuminating and to use written information as a lens for critical understanding of the world.

There are different ways of combining and integrating these elements - the ELP course did it in one way as described in chapter 2 and other literacy organizations have done it in other ways. This integration does not make a course more or less convivial, but it does make the course more or less authoritative. I have come to understand that the integration of technical skills, practical judgement and emancipatory exploration is an essential requirement for a course to be intrinsically authoritative in the practice of ABET. That is also in line with thinking in the NQF (National Qualifications Framework) which advocates the integration of 'essential outcomes' like "using critical and creative thinking" and "making wise and safe choices" (IEB, 1996, p10) with

'specific outcomes' stating the "exact skills and information required in a particular situation" (p11).

There are other requirements of texts: that information is accurate, passages written coherently, and concepts are up to date. In terms of quality, these responsibilities to the practice should be taken for granted.

Secondly, course materials have a responsibility to learners. They need to be appropriate to the identities and interests of the particular group of adults they are written for. Teachers' reasons for choosing the ELP course and the discussions generated in class as recorded in Chapter 5, illustrate what a difference it makes to the quality of learning when a text gets that right. To be convivial, course materials should provide the space and the incentive for adult learners to insert their lives into the classroom process. Course materials written for children and superficially adapted for adult use are not acceptable for ABET.

Texts also need to take into account the prior skill levels and background knowledge of ABET learners. The Std. 3 geography textbooks Langhan studied were a disturbing example of texts that did not fulfil their responsibility to learners - they took no account of the children's prior knowledge of geography or English. Following on from Mercer's description of 'scaffolding', I posited that materials share the task of 'scaffolding' with teachers. Course materials outline the learning path and also plan and design the learning activities, while teachers support learners to complete the tasks set by the activities. Both Mercer and the research findings pointed to the fact that 'scaffolding' is only effective when the task is within the limits of the learners' ability to learn, i.e. within their Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). For textbooks to be effective, they must fall within the ZPD of learners. They must create a bridge between the knowledge and identities that learners currently possess, and the skill and knowledge outcomes required by the practice. To do that well, ABET course materials need to be steeped in on-the-ground research into the ability level of potential learners.

As Langhan found, texts that are above the level of the learners tend to 'impose the rote learning style'. For course materials to be convivial and user-friendly they need to speak to the identities of the learners and 'scaffold' at the appropriate skill level.

Thirdly, course materials have a responsibility to teachers. As Eisner says, they need to enable teachers and "foster a sense of competence" (p368). They function as a tool to strengthen teachers' knowledge of the practice, in relation to both the content and the pedagogy. They support and extend what was learned on teacher training courses.

As mentioned above, particularly in an ABET context where the boundaries of subjects are not well established, course materials support teachers by providing clarity about what to teach. Without a textbook, it is difficult for teachers to walk into the classroom with a clear sense of what they are supposed be teaching unless they have spent hours preparing for each lesson.[13] Even if teachers find points of disagreement, at least there is something to disagree with. My findings showed clearly that course materials provide the foundation for what happens in the classroom. What is then built on that foundation can look quite different from one learning group to the next.

In addition, course materials at ABET levels are responsible for indicating how to go about teaching. They need to signpost which methods and approaches can be used on the pedagogical path to be followed. They open up certain ways of teaching, provide stimulation and possibilities.

ABET courses need to take care that the conceptions of teaching contained in their pedagogy sufficiently fit the conceptions of teaching held by the majority of teachers and the educational context in which the courses will be used. As became clear in Marshall's observation of literacy teachers in Mozambique, if texts promote a style of teaching that is too foreign to teachers, they will be misused. Again, it is an issue of the Zone of Proximal Development, this time applied to teachers and their ideas of what makes for good teaching. While watching the ELP course in use it became clear how teachers responded to the methods suggested by the text differently: they used the methods they were familiar with, they tried out a few that were not too novel and they ignored those outside of their 'conceptional' zone. For texts to become a scaffolding tool in the ZPD of the teachers' pedagogical skills, they need to both fit teachers' conceptions of pedagogy and stretch those conceptions.

[13] As Basil Bernstein spells out in his chapter on visible and invisible pedagogies (1977), where the boundaries of a subject or a pedagogy are not clear, it is more difficult to teach. The less defined the boundaries are, the more the teacher needs to have internalised the knowledge that is to be transmitted.

ABET course materials are thus responsible for scaffolding two sets of relationships: between the learners and the knowledge or skills of the practice, and between the teachers and the pedagogy of the practice. Their conviviality depends on how accessible the scaffold is, and on how open-ended it is, i.e. on how well it enables learners and teachers to own the practice and to insert themselves into it.

To conclude: in order to meet their responsibilities, ABET course materials need to be both authoritative and convivial: their intrinsic authority lies in their ability to fully represent the skills, social uses and emancipatory potential of second language and literacy learning; while their conviviality depends on how accessible and how generative they manage to make that knowledge for learners and teachers. If they fulfil their responsibilities to the practice, to learners and to teachers, they become valuable tools, enabling learners' access to literacy and teachers' growth into the practice.

6.2.2 Regarding the Relationship between ABET Teachers and Texts

Tools are by their nature passive - they need to be picked up and used. Course materials, no matter how authoritative they are, cannot enforce anything. They are passive in the classroom compared to the teacher being active. They wait for the teacher to enliven the possibilities they contain. So the question becomes: what is the nature of the relationship between the teacher and the course materials?

The lesson observations indicate that the relationship is a complex one, with the authority moving back and forth between teacher and text. At times, teachers accept the authority of the text - illustrated by Thomas' comment: "I didn't know that either. Let's say thank you to this book" or Richard's introduction to a new exercise: "This is a bit more difficult. They don't just want a word, but a whole sentence". At other times, teachers impose their authority on the text, as when Joseph chose particular exercises from the grammar workbooks. Then again, teachers collaborate as partners with the text, as when Selina made posters and charts or Richard brought additional texts to read from. At times, teachers block the impact of the text, as when Elizabeth glossed over union history. At other times, they build on the text, as when Elizabeth initiated a class discussion about the history of 'June 16' and added 'Valentine's Day' to the list of days to

remember. The relationship is not static - there are variations of behaviour between teachers and also within the same teacher.

These are small examples of particular behaviours, yet I think they are indicative of more general approaches that teachers can take to textbooks. As discussed above, ABET course materials embody a conception of what is valuable knowledge and what the best way is of passing on that knowledge. ABET teachers come to the job with their own conception of what makes for good teaching, which they developed during teacher training and by observing the people who taught them. If these two conceptions overlap, then it is easy for teachers to submit to, add their voice to, collaborate with, challenge and learn from a textbook - to the benefit of the learners. If these conceptions diverge, all kinds of misunderstandings can occur, as seen in chapter 5 in the research Gabi Witthaus conducted for ELP. I will pick up on the issue of teachers' conceptions of good teaching in the next section.

It seems to me, that not only do textbooks have responsibilities to teachers, as described above, but teachers also have responsibilities to textbooks. I would like to describe some of those responsibilities as I see them.

Firstly, for teachers to accept the intrinsic authority of the course materials they are using, they need to trust that the text is a valid reflection of the practice. If they lack that trust, they should throw the textbook aside and investigate until they find a more appropriate one. Teachers need to choose a text they consider authoritative in the practice and convivial for their context. That might be difficult, and a bit idealistic, in terms of the ABET structural context. Yet if ABET course materials get used only because they are imposed by an extrinsic authority, they will appear authoritarian and their effect will be to de-power rather than empower teachers.

Take the relationship between teachers and the ELP course as an example. The Course intends to empower teachers in their work, and the responses in the interviews indicated clearly that teachers experienced it as such. As Selina said: "The books gave me courage, made me love ABET". But in the wrong context, the ELP course could become disempowering. If imposed on teachers by the company or ABET training organization, if forced into time frames between examinations that are too short, if given without training to teachers who do not understand its underlying conception and thus cannot make sense of its communicative and emancipatory methodology, or

if provided to classes with illiterate learners, the ELP course would inspire resistance rather than love for ABET. Apple came to the same insight when looking historically at the relationship between teachers and texts. Depending on the context in which 'standardised texts' are provided, teachers can be grateful for the 'essential tools', or resist them as 'impositions' (1991, p8).

Secondly, having accepted it as a true authority, teachers have a responsibility to follow the guidance of the course in the classroom. They should respect that the old-timers who wrote the course had a logic and reason for structuring the knowledge and skills in the way they did. Teachers should not ignore exercises, swap the sequence around or change the purpose of activities. Especially if they are teaching with the text for the first time, they need to submit their teaching to the structure it provides. Adapting course materials before they are fully understood can easily lead to confusion.

Following Polanyi, I am not advocating blind submission. I have said before that it is also teachers' responsibility to add their voice - to comment on the text, to add to its knowledge or to guide learners to critically appraise what the book is saying. But they should do so within the framework provided by the text.

At issue is the paradox of an enabling constraint. When we are working within limits, possibilities can open up. If teachers follow the sequence and methodology of quality ABET course materials, they and their learners are assured of a learning programme that will provide them access to the skills of literacy and English language. Their learning will have a sense of direction and overall coherence. The security of a set learning programme frees up energy for teachers to plan additional activities - be it to visit the ABET library, to celebrate Adult Learning Week or to discuss learners' issues.

The workbook format of the ELP course provides additional constraints and freedoms. The constraints are that exercises are prescribed, in a set sequence, with suggestions for how to do them. But precisely because the exercises are set out so clearly, learners can do a lot without the teachers' constant intervention. That in turn frees teachers to work with learners individually and scaffold their work to ensure optimal learning.

Thirdly, it is teachers' responsibility to mediate between the course materials and the learners. Teachers need to scaffold the gaps between learners' ability and the tasks set by a course-book. At ABET levels learners also need to be taught how to use texts, how to extract what they need from the written word. Without careful scaffolding, learners cannot follow and benefit from the teachings in a textbook.

A crucial component of that scaffolding is the quality of correction and feedback that teachers give to learners. From the observations, I realised that what teachers chose to correct and how they corrected it made the difference between clarity and confusion for learners with regard to the skills of literacy and language. When corrections were inappropriate to the skill at issue, or not tailored to the particular mistake, or did not pick up on the learner's misunderstanding, they created confusion rather than learning.

Teachers need to develop the ability to pick on the salient language and literacy skills that are worth correcting and to correct appropriately. That ability can be developed if teachers become increasingly knowledgeably skilled in the particular practice of second language and literacy learning. It is not enough to be able to teach adults, it is not enough to be able to teach life skills and other content - teachers also need an understanding of second language issues and how they affect literacy.

To conclude: teachers need to meet their responsibilities to the text they are using in order to properly fulfil their responsibilities to learners. Teachers need to select trustworthy texts, submit creatively to the authority of the text they have chosen, and develop their own knowledge and skills in the practice so as to scaffold the text effectively for learners.

Enough of all the responsibilities - what are the benefits for teachers in working with course materials? The main benefit to the teacher is support. When teachers follow the textbook, they know what they are doing and that gives them authority in class. They do not need to feel insecure about their performance. With the help of quality course materials, they can shift attention away from themselves and focus on the performance of the learners.

6.2.3 Regarding ABET Teacher Development

In this section I am returning to a debate mentioned in the chapter on the ABET context for ELP's curriculum development: the two trends for literacy teachers either slavishly following the course materials provided, or discarding all set materials and creating their own for each class. More recently that has become a debate between different forms of teacher training. Should training be generic, i.e. providing general principles and leaving teachers to find classroom materials as they see fit? Should it be materials-bound, i.e. in the short time available show teachers how to work with particular course materials? Or is there a compromise option of materials-based training, i.e. introducing teachers to general principles through work with particular course materials?

The readings and observations for this research project have clarified for me that this is actually a debate about how to draw teachers into the practice, about how to equip teachers to become knowledgeably skilled ABET practitioners. How does one pass on the identity and knowledge of the old-timers? Both training and course materials have a vital role to play in that task. Let me illustrate what I mean.

One of the questions that arose when I looked at the fieldwork in chapter 5 through the lens of the readings in chapter 4 was: is the ELP course a convivial tool for initiating teachers into the practice of English literacy in ABET? Are the ELP workbooks a tool to use in the Zone of Proximal Development of the teacher? My answer was: 'Yes. But their effect is limited.'

The reason for that answer is the way in which teachers responded to the methodology embedded in the Course. Generally, the teachers were positive about and followed the exercises outlined in the workbooks - "if the chapter advises me" as Selina said. What I found interesting to analyse was which kinds of exercises were occasionally ignored or adapted in terms of their purpose. Exercises within a technical paradigm, like gap-fills, substitution tables or comprehension questions, were always done. Exercises within a practical paradigm, like role-plays, question-answer type discussions, quizzes were mostly done. Exercises within an emancipatory paradigm, like curriculum negotiation, learner self-assessment or projects that involved learners working outside of the control of the teacher, were ignored or adapted often - but not always.

This is how I understand the significance of that analysis: Teachers will see and use what a textbook offers in different ways depending on their own conceptions of teaching. In response to the suggestions from a textbook, teachers will tend to implement only methods which are familiar or with which they agree in terms of their conception of what makes for good teaching. They will tend to ignore suggestions for methods that fall outside of their conceptions. The classic example from my fieldwork is the difference between Selina's and Joseph's approach to the grammar workbooks. So, if teachers' conceptions are limited to a technical paradigm, modelled by the traditional teaching they received in their childhood, then they will implement the gap-fills and ignore the quizzes. If their conceptions embrace a practical paradigm, and, as we saw from Pratt, many ABE teachers have a nurturing conception which is concerned to build the everyday confidence of making judgements, then they will also try their hand at the role-plays and discussions. If their conception extends to include an emancipatory paradigm, they will be open to experimenting with learner-controlled exercises.

What my findings seem to indicate is that the ELP course was very helpful to teachers wherever it fitted their conception. It gave them the skilled back-up to implement ways of teaching that they already approved of. It probably gave them the impetus to try out exercises they had not used before but which they thought were a good idea. It supported them to go further along a pedagogical path which they had decided to go down anyway. It could teach them about teaching for as long as it was within their ZPD. What the ELP course could not do was go beyond that zone: it did not change or shift teachers' conceptions in any fundamental way. Exercises that fell outside of their conception were adapted or ignored. I conclude therefore that texts can add to or refine teachers' conceptions, but they cannot change those conceptions.

Changing or greatly extending conceptions of teaching is the task of teacher training and development courses. During training courses, teachers have the time to focus on their own learning. They can engage with the underlying conceptions and the ways of implementing new methodologies that are communicative, learner-controlled or in other ways more ‘progressive’ than the methods they are familiar with. Teacher training can provide the dynamically questioning and interactive space that teachers need in order to develop and change their conceptions.

Course materials are useful in the everyday reality of the classroom to back-up and refine that learning. Even if teachers are theoretically convinced of the value of an emancipatory approach, the formality and pressure of the classroom will tend to make them forget to use emancipatory activities. Then course materials can remind teachers where and how such activities are appropriately inserted.

To conclude: to become knowledgeably skilled practitioners, ABET teachers need initial teacher training, course materials to direct the learning programme in their classes and frequent teacher development courses. To think that one kind of input is sufficient without the others is simply to deprive teachers of the support and ongoing development they deserve.

6.2.4 Concluding Comment

Throughout this research I conceived of the ELP course as an example of innovation in the field, an expression of "the highest standards reached so far" in the practice of ABET English second language literacy. But thinking about the teachers, who were all relative newcomers to the practice and who, other than Joseph, had not used any other courses, the irony struck me that in a year or two the ELP course will represent 'the tradition'. What we thought of as an innovative course will become 'the tradition' to react against. I found some consolation in Hargreaves' comment: "The real challenge of reform as a process is acknowledging that every solution has a problem. What we can most hope for is not achievement of solutions but elevation to a better class of problems" (p138).

6.3 Limitations of this Research

There are several areas of enquiry pertaining to the interplay between teachers and texts in the context of ABET English literacy that I was not able to explore. These silences circumscribe the insights gained from the research, making it a less full picture.

- I observed the relationship teachers and texts in context, but did not integrate learners into that equation. I did not investigate learners' responses to the ELP course, nor did I look at

its effectiveness in enabling learner progress and cognitive development. That means this research cannot be taken in any way as an evaluation of the ELP course.

- I did not engage at all with approaches to English second language teaching methodology. I have talked loosely about EFL and ESL, although I know that the rapidly changing theoretical debates around language have created many new concepts and terminology. That means this research is not up-to-date with regard to language teaching theory and also that the 'practical theory' of language learning which underpins the ELP course has not been fully explored.

- I did not read much about the nature of the change process, i.e. what enables and constrains teachers in their attempts to change their conceptions of teaching. I only mapped out their current positions in relation to texts, not how those positions change over time. I also did not explore the implications of the practical paradigm for teacher development, i.e. what makes for a reflective practitioner. That makes this research limited with regard to insights into the implementation of ABET teacher development programmes.

6.4 Recommendations Arising from this Research

There are three areas of recommendations: advice for ELP when it comes time to rework the ELP course, suggestions for trainers doing initial and in-service training with ABET teachers, and possibilities for further research in ABET. I selected these as significant through the filter of my own issues. Readers might well want to formulate their own implications and recommendations from the thick description offered in this research.

6.4.1 For Reworking the ELP Course

6.4.1.1 Repackage in Line with the IEB exams

ELP needs to repackage the Course so that it fits more neatly into the IEB examinations. ELP needs to give up on the modular concept and create one linear package appropriate to ABET

English Communications levels 1,2,3. That means restructuring so there are four workbooks for each level. The grammar workbooks form a coherent programme among themselves and might need to become an enrichment option in parallel to the Course. Marketing research needs to establish whether it is in any way feasible to continue with the workbook format at levels 1 and 2.

ELP needs to make the relationship between the competencies developed by the Course and the outcomes required by the IEB examinations more explicit. That could be done in a Teachers' Guide to accompany the Course. The tests at the end of each workbook should be reworked to look more like IEB examinations.

A skill required for the IEB examinations are written responses to indicate comprehension and interpretation of a variety of text types. In the current structure of the Course, this skill is explored in *Reading Stories*. All the other workbooks are more concerned to elicit learners' voices. It might be better if all workbooks had some focus on exercises for learners to debate about and reflect on the voice of a text (i.e. a passage). Then the Course could more fully develop learners' ability to stand back from a text and discuss its voice.

6.4.1.2 Write a Teachers' Guide

The aim of a Teacher's Guide accompanying the ELP course would be to scaffold it for teachers by making the assumptions and principles underlying the Course more explicit, by giving practical 'how to' support, and by providing alternative options.

Some of the issues that such a Guide should contain are:

- The purpose, intentions, conceptions of the Course
- The outcomes covered and how they relate to the IEB examinations.
- The relative weighting of exercises, e.g. in this chapter, the important skill to focus on is... Don't spend too much time on ...
- Explicit rationales for the methods used as well as guidance on how to do them.
- Information about English second language learning and about the development of literacy skills.
- Suggestions and additional activities for how to accommodate mixed level teaching, particularly now that the mix and match concept is being dropped.

An issue for debate and further research is whether such a Guide should give step by step guidance and insist on teachers getting lots of practice before starting to adapt exercises or whether it should focus more on rationales, options and possibilities. Whatever is decided on, it is well to remember Bhola's advice: "Projects should not cut corners on teachers guides. These guides should supply both the methodology of teaching and substantive knowledge. .. The teacher must be knowledgeable enough to be an agent for change" (p103).

6.4.1.3 Make Learner-controlled Activities easier to Manage

The learner self assessment exercises need a clearer statement of purpose. For example, the 'What do you want to learn?' pages should change into 'These are the skills you will learn in this book' kinds of pages.

Similarly, the projects need to be reworked. I am not sure what conclusion to draw from the evidence - that projects are too much effort and should be left out? Or that the Course needs to restructure the projects so as to make them more inviting? Or that teacher training needs to make an extra effort to familiarise teachers with how to manage projects? Or that projects only work in contexts that are well resourced? But I suggest that rather than take them out, they be reworked to become easier for learners to do and easier for teachers to manage.

6.4.1.4 Do Not Reconceptualise

As I mentioned above, this research did not constitute an evaluation. Nevertheless, the findings indicated that the basic premise of the Course - teaching English literacy through life skills - worked successfully. The ELP course does not need to be reconceptualised.

6.4.2 For ABET Teacher Trainers

6.4.2.1 Need for Ongoing Teacher Development

There is a need for ongoing ABET teacher development As seen in chapter 5, less than two weeks of training are the norm for ABET teachers. It is absurd to expect that a one-week initial teacher training course is sufficient to develop knowledgeably skilled ABET practitioners. There is too much to learn.

Ongoing teacher development is necessary for teachers to reflect on and shift their conceptions of teaching. Teachers expressed an eagerness to learn more and seemed willing to change their approaches providing their experience is not devalued in order to demonstrate the need for change. Ongoing teacher development is also necessary to maintain the impetus for change.

There is need for teacher - teacher interaction in structured workshops where teachers can learn from outsiders and each other. The Forum for the Advancement of Adult Education used to offer such workshops, then the IEB did while they were developing the exams. The ABET Department should start offering them. Workshops are an important place where teachers can position themselves in a community of practice.

6.4.2.2 Need for Training to be Reflective

ABET teacher development needs to deal with conceptions of what makes for good teaching in a reflective way. In ABET circles there is often a debate about what level of education potential teachers should have. Reflecting on the teachers I observed, it seems to me that the important factor is not how much, but what kind of education and training the teachers received.

Teacher training courses must enable teachers to reflect on their own education and their own opinions about teaching, so teachers can become conscious of the differences between methodologies they take for granted and the new methodologies presented by the training course. It would be useful to have consciousness raising exercises regarding teachers' experience of being taught so they can look at the models they have unconsciously imbibed and see how they relate

to the new kinds of teaching they are being shown. Teachers also need to see demonstrations of good teaching, either on videos or through trainer demonstrations. This would provide them with an alternative model, so they can take away the memory of an experience of how to teach and learn differently.

Training courses need to enable teachers to think about the relationship between their objectives and their methods. For example, if a teacher wants to achieve understanding, empowerment and self sufficiency for learners, what methods of reading, writing, or correction will best contribute to that overall aim? Teachers often know the jargon of emancipatory or interactive teaching, but lack the technical abilities to implement it.

To achieve the purpose of reflection, a training course should move back and forth between practical examples and issues of purpose or theory - building a cycle of theory, practice and reflection which Freire called 'praxis'. Trainers also need to be conscious of teachers' Zones of Proximal Development with regard to their conceptions of teaching and take care to scaffold shifts of conception to those limits and beyond.

6.4.2.3 Look at Teacher -Text Relationship

Teacher development should look directly at the nature of the relationship between teachers and texts. As seen earlier, there are many aspects to the relationship between teachers and textbooks, for example, the integrity of the text, the teacher's knowledge of and confidence in the practice, and the contextual pressures limiting choice. These issues should be dealt with directly on a teacher training programme. In particular, training should deal with the following:

- Clear criteria for appropriate materials, so teachers can make informed choices.
- The ability to look for the purpose and skill levels assumed by books, lessons or chapters and to compare that to the teacher's own purpose. It affects the relative weighting that a teacher gives to exercises and the pacing of lessons. It is also an essential ability before teachers can start adapting or selectively using materials. This ability though, is dependent on the teacher's knowledge in and conception of the practice.
- An attitude of co-operation with the text - which allows neither submission nor dismissal and emphasises opening up issues of disagreement with ideas or methods in the book.

- Talk directly about the roles and responsibilities of teachers and texts in relation to each other and how that affects learners.

It is an issue for debate how to structure the progression of the teacher training. Should initial teacher training provide the how and why of a particular course and then encourage teachers to teach directly from the text, leaving additions and adaptations for later teacher development workshops? Or should teachers be encouraged to adapt and create their own materials from the beginning? Bhola suggests that teachers must be fully familiar with the materials before being able to adapt them to meet local needs (p99). He also suggests that "a large part of training should be spent on learning about the use of the materials, .. with enough information on why they are asked to do certain things" (p110).

6.4.2.4 Attend to Particular Methods

Teacher development should pay particular attention to methods that fall outside the zone of teachers' traditional methodologies. ABET teachers need both the conceptions underlying and the ways of implementing methods such as pair-work, projects, strategies for mixed level classes, strategies for correction, visual literacy and the educational paradigm shift from a focus on content to a focus on skills and outcomes. In general, teachers need more knowledge about the practice of second language teaching.

6.4.3 For Further Research

ABET is an under-researched field of education with little funding available for research and a "weak research base" (Survey, 1996, p500). So any research conducted in the practice is valuable and important. Arising out of this research, I have three suggestions of areas for further exploration.

- It is important to gather and record the learnings of the non-governmental literacy organizations. Adult literacy NGOs are being marginalized through lack of funding. They accumulated a lot of experience in the last decade which will get lost unless there is some research to develop a culture of transmission.

- It is important to track the influence of the new system of examinations on ABET classroom practice. Examinations determine which knowledge is officially considered to be important and how that knowledge is to be expressed. Their influence on classroom practice is therefore substantial. The recent introduction of the IEB adult examinations intended to have and is having a widespread impact on the field. This impact should be documented.

- It would be valuable to explore the interplay of factors that make the ABET context convivial, that ensure a context in which effective and appropriate learning can take place. From this research it seems that influential factors are: regular attendance because classes are in paid work time, proper venues, money for books and other resources, the discipline of examinations, the availability of a coherent and appropriate learning programme, good quality teaching, professional support for teachers, moral and organisational support from the company environment. If any of these factors are missing, experience with community groups show that learners vote with their feet. As Cornbleth maintains "Designing the desired curriculum practice is only one aspect of contextualised curriculum planning. A second and more important aspect is creating the necessary supporting conditions or contexts - usually a much more difficult undertaking" (p188).

> That the classes I watched were so solid was thanks to the teachers, the company ABET committees, CEP's professional support, and the ELP course.

This research journey is at an end, the spiral of enquiry has come full circle. Out of the insights gained from it have come possibilities for new journeys into further research and ABET teacher development.

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