Chapter 1: The Introduction

1.1 Introduction

This study investigates the transitional literacy experiences of grade 3 and 4 learners in two primary schools in Gauteng province as they move from the foundation phase[1] to the intermediate phase[2]. It examines the strategies used by teachers and learners, literacy experiences and practices, curriculum materials and instructional pedagogies encountered by learners in negotiating the grades 3 to 4 academic journey. The learners' experiences with literacy during the transition inform the central concern of this study in as far as they enhance or constrain the fluidity of the transitional process across the two phases.

In everyday use the term transition refers to any movement or change, be it physical, intellectual, moral, cultural or otherwise, from one phase of life to another. In the school system such transition can happen between grades R to grade 1 (pre-school to foundation phase), grade 3 to 4 (foundation to intermediate phase), grade 7 to 8 (intermediate to senior phase), grade 9 to 10 (senior to FET), grade 12 (FET) to tertiary institutions, and university/college to the work place and so on. In this study I use the term to mean an ongoing psychosocial process through which learners come to terms with literacy, cognitive, academic and curriculum growth that comes with a demand for advanced knowledge/competences and a change of environment.

I use transitional literacy in this study, thus, to refer to the reading and writing competences a learner has as he/she moves from one school phase to another, enabling the learner to encounter the curriculum demands of the new environment. I also use the phrase transitional literacy to refer to the process involving cognitive and language development which continues throughout

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[1] Also called infant phase, grade R to 3.
[2] Often called junior primary, grade 4 to 7

the education system and revolves around the ability to functionally utilize material read, heard, sensed or written in a particular and familiar script (scientific, mathematical or otherwise) and language either wholly or in part, at the intersection between these two educational phases.

1.2 Literacy and My Reflections

My history in the field of language and literacy stretches back some twenty five or so years when I started practising as a primary school teacher after a three year teacher's diploma in rural Zimbabwe. My first grade 3 class was no different from any other grade 3s one would find in any rural school in that system of education. They could hardly read with fluency and comprehension; would smudge and cross out and paid little attention to the appropriateness exhibited in their work. Like many in communities where English is a foreign language and rarely spoken in the vicinity of the home, they struggled with sentence construction, vocabulary and meaning making in English. Literacy resources were scarce and infrastructural facilities poor. What learners possessed was the zeal and enthusiasm to learn. This indispensable attribute matched my ambition and inspiration to make a difference in the lives of others.

I had been schooled on the power of education and the fruits of hard work, commitment and dedication through the teacher training programme I had undergone for three years of full time study. At that time the highly successful education-for-all programme started in Zimbabwe in 1980 was an overwhelming success. I had known that the ability to read and interpret the world could make people better their situations. Situations, be it educational, economic, cultural, political or otherwise can be changed by the choices we consciously make. Likewise literacy conditions and situations can be changed. Like any handicap, illiteracy is a serious drawback in the sociocultural and economic transformational agenda. As one reads the word they read the

world (Freire and Macedo, 1987). That social justice agenda became instrumental. My work with that class opened a long history of literacy and language education that I have lived with and committed to for many years.

I later became a college and university lecturer in (English) language and literacy studies and witnessed the different personalities and characters that pervaded the field of education as teachers, including others who trained because they merely needed a profession to put bread and butter on their tables, as well as others who genuinely responded to a call to serve.

The works of Paulo Freire (1972; 1974), Fanon (1968) and later Street (1983, 1993, 2001, 2007), Barton and Hamilton (2000), Gee, (1996) and others became rallying points in what had become a war against illiteracy among our people. Stories of people crossing the crocodile infested Limpopo river from economically hit (now awakening) Zimbabwe into hostile and xenophobic South Africa, appeared to draw parallels with the experiences children live through when they transition from the foundation phase to the intermediate phase. Discussions with other academics on the subject pointed to an area in education studies that not only tapped into my history, condition and space, but that genuinely required understanding on the part of the educational trajectories of learners. The grade 3 to 4 transition became an area of my interest. As a foreign national working and studying in South Africa, I could tap into both the outsider and insider perspectives in an effort to understand transitional issues in primary school education.

Knowing as we do what research has established regarding the many gaps that lie between the foundation phase and the intermediate phase (Motshekga, 2009, 2014; Paxton, 2007; Reeves, 2008), I realised we are dealing with another case of learners moving from one often problematic situation into the other. Seligman (2012) observes that parents send children to schools in part

because they realise there isn't much literacy and numeracy, life skills and other demands of life they can offer on their own. The school is then entrusted with the cognitive, affective and psychomotor development of the child. In doing so the school has a responsibility to ensure that the learning process takes place and that the conditions in the school maximize the enhancement of this responsibility. In the same light much as there did not appear to be any measurable and observable steps to receive and accommodate the asylum and refugee seekers in South Africa, there was need to understand how our schools enhanced the smooth transition of learners to the intermediate phase. The quest to understand this phase of transition through a literacy lens had become a new 'Beit Bridge' leading me into the wider, polemic (from a South African and international context), contested and often confusing though compelling terrain of literacy pedagogy and research.

1.3 Aims of the Study

Reading and writing are central to all other literacy learning challenges that learners experience (MacDonald and Burroughs, 1991). The two domains are generally the most challenging to the primary school pupil (Reeves, Heugh, Prinsloo, MacDonald, Netshitangani, Alidou, Diedericks and Herbst, 2008) and their mastery opens avenues to content in other subjects in the curriculum. Thus, this study aimed at investigating the experiences learners undergo in reading and writing at the critical point between foundation and intermediate phases with the notion that any discrepancies in the transition between these two domains could significantly affect the pupil's progress and conception of content in other curriculum areas. The central concern of my study was to seek understanding of the gaps and continuities between the foundation phase and the intermediate phases by establishing whether or not learners' literacy experiences and practices at

grade 3 level adequately prepared them to confront and negotiate their way successfully to the intermediate phase.

1.4 The Research Questions

The study asks the following questions:

1. Does foundation phase reading and writing in two primary schools adequately prepare pupils for the academic demands of the intermediate phase?
2. What strategies are used by pupils to negotiate the transition from the foundation to the intermediate phase and how can these strategies be understood and explained in relation to the increasing academic and cognitive demands of the literacy curriculum?
3. What strategies are used by teachers to assist pupils negotiate the transition from the foundation to the intermediate phase and how can these strategies be understood and explained in relation to the increasing academic and cognitive demands of the literacy curriculum?
4. To what extent does the South African language in education policy assist or affect the transition from the foundation to the intermediate phase of the primary school?

1.5 Rationale

The notion that transition from the foundation to the intermediate phases is often problematic, at least in the short term, is not a new phenomenon. Abundant studies evidence this (Green, 1997; Cairney et.al, 1998; McGee, 1989; McDonald, 1991; Chall, Jacobs and Baldwin, 2003; Sanacore and Palumbo, 2009). Such research on transition shows that there is room for potential difference or discontinuity in the journey from the foundation to the intermediate phase (McGee, 1989).

When viewed in terms of the literacy-related demands involved, the complexity of such a journey and the potential for discontinuity within it comes to the fore.

Transitional literacy, in the context I use the concept, is an under researched area in South Africa. Thus, from the outset this study contributes new knowledge through its exploration of the transitional process with regards to literacy development. Research on transition in South Africa has not focused on the way systems work with a specific focus on the learners and how their place in the transition matrix is made harder. Other than Hornberger (2004), I am not aware of any study in South Africa or elsewhere that has used an ecological (Bronfenbrenner, 2005) lens to understand transition at the foundation-intermediate phase and through a macro-to-meso-and microsystemic design.

There is little systematic study concerning the literacy practices and experiences of grade 3 and 4 learners. At present there is a notion that the school system is not effectively and competitively meeting the academic expectations of the nation (Motshekga, 2009; 2014). Many studies (Reeves et al, 2008; PIRLS 2011; World Economic forum, 2012; Makalela, 2015; Taylor, 2012; ANAs, 2010, 2012, 2013, etc) have identified literacy as a major issue in South Africa. It is the desire to more systematically explore the differences, similarities and impact of changing literacy practices across the foundation-intermediate divide that inspired this study.

The issue of transitional literacy is not in the pedagogic idea itself but in what learners do with it. Given the numerous challenges pupils encounter in their learning, it is important for teachers in schools, lecturers in colleges and education faculties in universities to carefully address the case of literacy and its role, particularly in the primary school. South Africa's performance in international comparative ratings has been very low in terms of learners' literacy achievements.

The Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) 2011 report (Mullis, Martin, Foy and Drucker 2012) rates South Africa as one of the lowest performing countries among the 45 countries measured at grade 4 and 5 levels.

This situation has necessitated severe criticism of the school curriculum for knowledge gaps and Motshekga (2009; 2014), the Minister of Basic Education, specifically isolates the intermediate phase curriculum as needing refinement. There is clearly a gap that needs greater understanding when South African learners transition from the foundation to the intermediate phase. It was this gap that my study intended to fill. I feel strongly that what happens at this key moment in time needs to be understood and explained, particularly from the emic perspective of the learners themselves. The complaint that pupils do not perform well across the curriculum because they have poor reading skills (Neuman and Roskos, 1993) deserves attention and the reaction of literacy practitioners. Here lies the place and importance of this study.

Learners often face challenges in grappling with concepts and skills at the intermediate phase if their reading and writing skills are not adequately addressed in foundation grades. Learners appear to find an academic and cognitive leap for which they may not have been adequately prepared. As such, it would appear what is set out as literacy in the foundation phase is different from how the intermediate phase curriculum constructs literacy, resulting in what has been termed a fourth grade slump (Chall, Jacobs and Baldwin, 2003; Yeboah, 2002; Sanacore and Palumbo, 2009).

Braund and Hames, (2005) observe that progression and continuity are cornerstones of the curriculum. There is general agreement that transition problems do exist and that they need a joint effort by all stakeholders to deal with them uniformly (Brown, Amwake, Speth and Scott-

Little, 2002; Yeboah, 2002). Thus, transitional processes need to be studied to establish their role as one of the factors bedeviling education in South Africa.

It is necessary to understand the theoretical and sociocultural orientations that inform education policy in South Africa (Reeves et al, 2008) in order that literacy teaching could be understood in this context and then, if necessary, evaluated from a collective standpoint with literacy programmes elsewhere. Questions pertaining to the use of language of learning and teaching in schools become particularly important in multilingual societies such as the situation in urban South Africa – especially for parents, teachers and policy makers. This study makes a contribution to the existing corpus of knowledge on transitioning and English literacy pedagogy, specifically in South Africa, and in as far as reading and writing are concerned.

In a nutshell, the emphasis is on the development of strong reading and writing practices across the curriculum. Included in this is the necessity of being able to read and write as well as understand and use spoken discourse from critical perspectives. Provision of adequate literacy opportunities in formal education is an absolute necessity for any democratic system (Reeves et al, 2008) that is concerned with educational parity and social equality.

1.6 Significance of the study

Current debates on the low literacy performances by South African primary and secondary school learners in both local and international literacy assessments (PIRLS, 2011; ANAs, 2012; TIMMS,2003; Taylor, 2012) and benchmarks point to multiple educational service delivery challenges, especially in township schools. It would appear that not enough discussion has occurred around the issue of transition. The literacy trajectories learners take may be one of the contributors to success or failure in learners' literacy journeys in schools. There have been very

few systematic studies (MacDonald and Burroughs, 1991) on school transition done in South Africa since the 1990s. As such, the area of phase transition has also been flagged by the Department of Higher Education and Training as well as Basic Education as a crucial aspect for research.

This study is important in that it looks at the complexities of transitional literacy in township schools which are typical of the majority of underperforming schools in South Africa. The study is also premised on learner voices in seeking to contextualize the complex conditions under which children and teachers work in order to make a nuanced argument about the problems learners experience during the foundation-to-intermediate phase transition. The study raises questions about schools and their policies, the discrepancies between the assumed knowledges and literacies learners bring from one grade/phase to the other, as well as challenges deficit perceptions of parents as disinterested players in their children's education. The study thus contributes new knowledge to an area currently deserving of attention and thus makes a necessary contribution to debates that can help shape educational planning and practice in South Africa and beyond. Educational planners, economic planners, politicians, lecturers in universities, researchers, practising teachers, parents and non-governmental organisations concerned with educational delivery would benefit from the findings of this study, both directly and indirectly.

1.7 Background to the Study

This study was carried out at a time when the education system in South Africa was moving from the National Curriculum Statement (DoE, 2009) to the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (DoE, 2011a-f). As such the study investigates transition at multiple, complex levels.

In order to understand those multiple transitional issues one cannot ignore the influence of context, and by extension, history. Transition happens in time and space. The context in which issues occur is critical to understanding how those issues unfold and how meanings are ascribed to them. This is shaped in part by history since proximal processes[3] (Bronfenbrenner 2005) and personal characteristics of both the learner and his/her teacher have to work together at the right time, in the appropriate context for literacy development to occur. The historical, social and cultural lenses to understanding transition are provided by the ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner and Morris, 1998) and a sociocultural theory of literacy which I draw on as theoretical frames with which to analyse data in this study.

It is therefore imperative that I briefly outline the historical journey South African education has travelled in order to set up how the past continues, at least in part, to influence and shape the current efforts to enhance provision of quality education and educational policies. The purpose of this background is to lay ground for the circumstances and interpretations that teachers and learners make of the curriculum, how they think and act, resulting in them doing things the way they do. Given the township setting of the study and the continuing bimodal distribution of education (Fleisch, 2008) and unequal school conditions (Mbeki, 1998), the study set out to understand transition from the vantage point of the black children in township schools as such schools are in the middle of the private – public divide.

I attempt to highlight government's commitment to rectifying the literacy problem as well as underscoring that the literacy challenges in South Africa are embedded in history. Such historical influences continue to affect efforts and issues of redress on discrepancies of the past. As such, addressing language and literacy is about tackling social injustices and enhancing social mobility

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[3] A particular form of interaction between the individual and his/her environment over a periods of time.

in our community. How learners and teachers construct themselves in relation to their literacy circumstances informs this study. I briefly discuss the nature of education before 1994 and then move on to the changes that followed in democratic South Africa after 1994. I include assertions of other scholars on the contemporary educational landscape in South Africa in order to foreground the case of transition within transition that I address later in this thesis.

1.7.1 The Educational Context Before 1994

The apartheid philosophy that informed South African politics and its system of governance prior to 1994 meant South African education was used to discriminate against people on grounds of colour alone (Hartshorne, 1999), and against the poor, the weak, and the oppressed, instead of being used to throw open the doors of opportunity. It was more concerned with protecting those with power, whether political or economic, than with sharing the benefits of education in an open democratic society. As a result the system of education segregated people into four sub-systems (Mncwabe, 1990), one for whites, the other for blacks, then for coloureds and finally for Indians. Primary education was compulsory and free for white children (Bizos, 2009) while that for black children was neither free nor compulsory. The system for white children aimed at preparing them for middle class careers while that for blacks was tailored to create labourers (Kallaway, 1990).

The governance mirrored the segregationist thinking; there being ten education departments in the ten homelands, four departments in the provinces for white children, a cabinet level minister for the education of black children in white areas, a cabinet minister to oversee general educational policy, and ministers of education attached to the coloured and Indian chambers of parliament (Weber, 2008; Mncwabe, 1990). These divisions were expanded through unequal spending that entrenched race and class differences.

Schools reserved for white children received bigger per capita funding and this resulted in better and more solid infrastructure (Botha, 2007; Mncwabe, 1990; Bizos, 2009). The facilities were better by all standards, had better resources and low teacher pupil ratios. Botha (2007) observes that teachers teaching in white schools were college and university trained in both pedagogical and content knowledge. These teachers had at least grade 12 education and at least a third of them were university graduates with degrees (De Lange Commission report 1978, in Bizos 2009). Except in Indian education, the education philosophy in all schools was informed by and advanced a Christian ideology (provision for education in RSA report, 1981). Although the education offered in the schools aimed at a broad national character, the notion of the nation was limited to whites and Afrikaner nationalism.

It is clear that education did not offer equal opportunities to all South Africans, and could not do so as long as it was racially segregated (Hartshorne, 1986; 1999). Damaging and destructive as it was to black South Africans through under-provision, inadequacy and inefficiency, in the long term it also failed privileged white South Africans.

Schools in black populated areas had inadequate buildings, no running water and electricity, hardly any sports fields, libraries or school halls and the teacher-pupil ratios were high (Botha, 2007; Sached, 1985). Where any of these were available, they were not of similar quality to those of their white counterparts. They were under-resourced with inadequate and poor quality furniture, books, stationery and equipment. Mother-tongue instruction in the primary school was entrenched in the first three years of school, the curriculum was less academic and had more emphasis on practical subjects and also ensured the replacement of white teachers by black teachers in those areas through the Bantu Education Act of 1953. The teachers in these schools were trained in the 120 teacher training colleges situated mainly in the homelands and rural areas

(Bizos, 2009; Sached, 1985). As a consequence, the drop-out rate in schools for black children was much higher than in schools for white children – so people did not get equal amounts of education.

The differences between schools permeated the system to also affect methods of teaching and learning (Fleisch, 2008; Mncwabe, 1990; Hartshorne, 1999; Botha, 2007). Deep concerns were expressed about rote learning, lack of broadening of the mind, lack of encouragement given to pupils to develop initiative and skills of independent thinking (Mncwabe, 1990), limited opportunities for problem solving and concentrating on abstract theory and verbiage for examinations. In spite of the high failure rate, the system itself was examinations oriented and left the majority of candidates frustrated (Hartshorne, 1999). The underlying ideologies in these schools were those of a colonised, marginalised people (Freire, 1974), aware that they were receiving an inferior education and fighting an inhumane system, at school level, through non-compliance (Botha, 2007) with the education authorities.

The conditions in the schools, the system of education, the inequalities in educational provision, among many others, led to tensions and later violence that later culminated in the Soweto uprising of 1976. Students complained about unqualified, immoral teachers, the quality of education, education facilities, insufficient textbooks and costly school uniforms (Dixon, 2007). Calls were made for a single education department in the hope that this would bridge the inequalities in educational provision.

Teachers trained under the Bantu Education Act of 1953 continue to serve in the South African schools to date, and further training has often not been successful. The inequalities in infrastructure, textbooks and stationery provision, teacher quality, and other essentials still exist,

especially in township schools such as the ones where this study was conducted. These are very apparent in the attitudes of both teachers and learners, the teaching methods employed by teachers and their literacy practices, the knowledge levels and communicative competency of teachers, and other areas this study describes. As such, some of the challenges impacting the levels of dysfunction in our schools could be understood in this historical context.

1.7.2 Towards Educational Reform – Post 1994

The attainment of democracy in 1994 brought a new dawn to South Africa. However, the post-apartheid government inherited an education system beset by a host of problems. Added to the problems of inequality were new dimensions of old problems such as imbalanced curricular policy, poor teacher education and unsatisfactory provision of teaching materials (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), 2008). The African National Congress (ANC) government was committed to addressing the inequalities in education (Gains, 2010; Fleisch, 2008; Motshekga, 2014) and thus ensure equality in all spheres of life. This meant the abolition of the apartheid system and the creation of a democratic society. The changes included the restructuring of the education administration into a single unified national Department of Education (DoE) as well as legislation and curriculum reforms to reduce historical inequalities (Bizos, 2009).

Changing from one system of education to another is always a messy and time consuming exercise, punctuated by key policy moves. The South African Schools Act of 1996 thus replaced the multiple school models of the fifteen education departments (Sached, 1985) of the apartheid era with two legally recognised categories of schools – public schools and independent (private) schools. The act also established school governing bodies with considerable powers such as

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determining the language of learning and teaching (LoLT) of their schools. This piece of legislation was followed by the Language in Education Policy (LiEP) of 1997 which was meant to ensure social justice in terms of language by promoting multilingualism through an additive approach. The view here was that language alone can enable or deny people participation in the political, educational, social and economic life of their country (Desai, 2001:325)

The LiEP of 1997 (DoE, 2010) sought to correct injustices of the past by promoting previously marginalised African languages[4] and recognising the importance of mother tongue instruction in all the 11 official languages since 1996, nine of which were formerly subjugated African languages. The policy advanced the Constitutional provision that "all official languages must enjoy parity of esteem and must be treated equally," (Constitution of South Africa, chapter 1 section 6(4), 1996). The underlying principle of the LiEP is to maintain the use of home language as the language of learning and teaching (DBE, 2010), especially in the early years, while providing access to an additional language/s.

Over and above the regulatory framework perhaps the most fundamental reform after the fall of apartheid has been curriculum innovation and change. The national curriculum was to serve two overarching aims. It needed to satisfy the general aim of nation building by setting out the philosophy underpinning the education system, and based on national priorities. The second objective was to address the specific goal of selecting socially valued knowledge[5] as well as pedagogical principles, to provide clarity to teachers and other stakeholders around the knowledge and teaching expectations of the curriculum.

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[4] The 11 official languages are Sepedi, Sesotho, Setswana, siSwathi, Tshivenda, Xitsonga, Afrikaans, isiNdebele, isiXhosa, isiZulu and English (South African Constitution, Chapter 1(6) 1996).
[5] According to Lawton in Bell (1971:9) curriculum is a selection from culture in terms of skills, attitudes, scope, sequence, depth, emphasis and content.

The first efforts towards curriculum reform concentrated on laying the foundations for a single national core syllabus and removing racist and other insensitive language from existing syllabi (Bizos, 2009). Realising that greater change would be required, in 1996 the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) Act (Act No. 58 of 1995) approved the establishment of a single, integrated, outcomes-based National Qualifications Framework and the state embarked on a programme of curriculum revision that effected a significant break with the past (Prinsloo and Janks, 2002). The result of such re-vision was Curriculum 2005 (C2005) for grades R-9 that was approved in 1997 and implemented in the foundation phase in 1998.

1.7.3 Curriculum 2005

It is clear that the concept of a national curriculum was a new concept in post-apartheid South Africa. Curriculum 2005 had to play a multitude of roles and respond to the needs of the new nation. It had to promote the new Constitution; rebuild a divided nation; establish and promote a sense of national identity in general but particularly for a troubled education sector; be inclusive in the broad and narrow sense of the term; offer equal opportunity for all; inspire a constituency that had been oppressed; and establish the socially valued knowledge to be transmitted to coming generations (DBE, 2009). As such C2005 was hastily and enthusiastically developed for the General Education and Training[6] (GET) band.

The key and clear message included a positive new beginning, the move away from Christian national education and its attendant philosophy of fundamental pedagogics to a new emphasis on rights-based education and the concept of child-centredness. The curriculum does not appear to have been researched or properly trial-run (Jansen, 2009; 2005). There was inadequate

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[6] GET band runs from grade R (reception year) to grade 9, and also includes adult education for this range.

preparation and consideration of whether teachers, pupils and the system in general were prepared for such fundamental change over such a short space of time (DBE, 2009). When measured against the need to cover the general and the specific aims of the curriculum, C2005 covered the general at the expense of the specific.

Soon C2005 was criticised for routinizing learning, deskilling the teaching profession and subjecting both teachers and students to sophisticated forms of surveillance through measures of performance (Fleisch, 2008). Also, teachers saw C2005 and OBE as one thing (Chisholm, et al 2000). The criticism appeared to be vindicated by the fact that children were apparently falling behind in reading, writing and counting (at the appropriate grade level) as well as their lack of general knowledge (DBE, 2009).

The jargon in C2005 was viewed as insensitive to the user and required to be simplified. According to Weber, (2008) C2005 was premised on availability of knowledgeable teachers, yet these did not exist in schools. It was in this significant flaw that C2005 and the whole project of curriculum reform and transition stood imperiled. There was "much confusion, some resistance and significant trepidation," (Fleisch, 2008:133).

Following calls for a review of Curriculum 2005 by teachers, parents, students, academics, the media and others, the then Minister of Education Kader Asmal set up a review committee to investigate the criticisms and make recommendations. Complaints about children's inability to read, write and count at the appropriate grade levels (MacDonald and Burroughs, 1991), their lack of general knowledge and the shift away from explicit teaching had become loud enough.

The *Curriculum 2005* review report by Chisholm, et al (2000) recommended that the design of the curriculum be simplified, curriculum overload be addressed in the GET band, and content be

brought into the curriculum and specified, among other things. This led to a *Revised National Curriculum Statement* (NCS2005) for GET that was completed in 2002 for implementation in January 2004. However, there were a number of shortcomings associated with its implementation that provided sufficient cause for another review process.

The NCS2005 explicitly attempted to shift the curriculum agenda towards a more coherent, explicit and systematic body of knowledge more suitable for a "national curriculum in the twenty first century" (DBE, 2009: 18) and more able to take its place amongst other regional and international curricula. It specifically set out to develop a high knowledge, high skills curriculum, resulting in a fundamental but necessary departure from *Curriculum 2005*.

One of the problems of the revised curriculum was its insistence on an outcomes-based framework. Outcomes, by definition, focus on attitudes, dispositions and competences, thus making the inevitable error of not specifying systematic, coherent content to be learnt at any given level. Other challenges included the lack of a clear implementation plan and a clear statement of benefits of the new revised version. It was marketed, not as a new curriculum policy, but as the same revised policy and thus was labelled C2005 with varied policy interpretations. Teacher training did not complement the new curriculum and in some cases neither addressed the newness nor the content deficit explicit in C2005.

The implementation of curriculum innovations is compounded by the multilingual nature of classrooms where as many as thirteen languages (a case of one of the classes in this research) may be found in one classroom, particularly in Gauteng. Also not clarified was the language policy as stated in the revised policy, resulting in the discrepancies between policy and

implementation that I address in chapter 6 of this study. As such, many schools did not introduce English at grade 1, and this was the case with one of the two schools in this study.

Ultimately, another committee was set up to review the implementation of CNS2005 and presented its findings in October 2009. Among its recommendations was the need for rationalisation of curriculum documents per subject from grade R to 12 into fresh, inclusive policy statements to be called *Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements* (CAPS). These statements were to be made available by September 2010 for roll-out in January 2011. Among other recommendations, the report underscores the need for coherence and smooth transition between phases, consistency and use of plain language, clarity on the appropriateness of methodologies and a strong campaign to launch the policy (between October 2010 and March 2011). CAPS was in the process of implementation during the course of this study. While it was planned for implementation in 2011, in practice CAPS only started in the foundation phase in 2012 and was only rolled out later in other phases.

What emerges from this historical outline is the fact that South African education has been riddled with challenges. The rolling out of CAPS in 2012 instituted a third curricular transition within the broader historical transition that was already underway since the dawn of the new democracy. Lessons from the history of curriculum reform after 1994 include the importance of teacher and learner involvement and concerns in the process of curriculum design. The effects of policies and plans on teachers need to be understood. It is clear in this chronicle that reservations were raised as early as 1998 of the appropriateness and implementation of the curriculum in South Africa but these warnings and reservations were not heeded. Attitudes towards criticism need to be reviewed to avoid teacher fatigue and policy cynicism in their minds that appear to hamper teacher responses and hence characterize education today. Such background has a

bearing on the way literacy teaching and learning is construed in the schools in this study. The history also sets the macro context in which data in this study was collected, interpreted and reported.

1.8 Definition of terms

Transition: In this study the term transition refers to an ongoing psychosocial process through which learners come to terms with literacy, cognitive, academic and curriculum growth that comes with a demand for advanced knowledge/competences and a change of environment on the part of the learner.

Literacy: I use the term to mean what people do with reading, writing, (Barton and Hamilton, 2000) creative thinking and texts in real world contexts. The term extends to include why people do what they do with reading and writing, as well as the effects of those actions/inactions on their being.

Transitional literacy: I use transitional literacy in this study to refer to the reading and writing competences a learner has as he/she moves from one school phase to another, enabling the learner to encounter the curriculum demands of the new environment.

Reading: An interactive process between the learner and the text in which readers use their knowledge to build, create and construct meaning.

Grade 4 slump: This is a phenomenon in which there is a general drop in academic performance which occurs when learners move from grade 3 to grade 4 as a result of the psychosocial factors related to academic, curricular and structural differences between the foundation and intermediate phases.

1.9 Overview

This chapter has foregrounded the complex problem of transitional literacy at the foundation-to-intermediate phase interface as the premise of the study and demonstrated that there has not been sufficient research done in the area. The chapter also identified the importance of situating the study in underperforming schools as well as giving prominence to learner voices as critical aspects in current debates on education the world over. The study probes the strategies used by learners and teachers in dealing with academic, curricular, psychological and language transitions that come with movement from one phase to the other. I have also outlined the historical background in which the study is couched while at the same time pointing to the historical influences in contextualizing the current state of educational provision in South Africa. I articulated the complementarity of the ecological systems model (Bronfenbrenner, 2005) and the sociocultural approaches to literacy as the dual theoretical frames informing this study. The significance of the study points towards making a crucial contribution the study envisages to existing knowledge in this area.

In chapter 2 I review literature on the major tenets of the ecological systems theory and sociocultural theories of literacy and other studies as the theoretical lenses for understanding transition and literacy. I pay close attention to how the theories relate to this study. Because of the significance of context in the two theories and the nature of the issues under study, chapter 3 attends to the context of the study to enable my reader to understand how matters unpack. Chapter 4 provides the methodological description of the case study design and how this marries with the ecological systems and sociocultural theory of literacy. Chapter 5 presents data that relates to curriculum transition while chapter 6 deals with language and language policy issues. Chapter 7 focuses on teaching and learning experiences in the two case schools while chapter 8

is dedicated to learner voices on their transitional experiences with reading and writing. The study concludes with chapter 9 which summarizes the study and proffers recommendations for further research.

Chapter 2: Review of Related Literature

2.1. Introduction

This study explores the transitional literacy experiences of learners as they move from the foundation phase to the intermediate phase of the primary school. Such transition is considered to take different forms, ranging from the psychological to the physical. When dealing with transition it is impossible to discount the influence of the psychological in understanding what goes on in the classroom.

The study employs Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems model as its theoretical lens and complements this theory with a sociocultural theory of literacy. The ecological systems theory and sociocultural theory of literacy are both instructive in contexts where the study is carried out in a high density suburb where poverty levels are predominantly higher than other areas of Gauteng. In order to provide context and situatedness I also consider the demands of the National Curriculum Statements (DoE, 2008) and Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements (DoE, 2011a-f). The area of reading and writing pedagogies at foundation and intermediate phases is also given consideration. I consider other studies that have attempted to understand the influence of language in education and studies that interrogate the language situation in South Africa.

2.2 Transition Defined

Transition and continuity are cornerstones of the curriculum (Braund and Hames, 2005; Makunye, 2009). Transition from one educational phase to another presents multiple complexities to learners that need informed and systematic attention of educationists. This includes changing academic practices that call for adjustment, new learning, proactive and changing roles. The term transition refers, generally, to life changes, adjustments and cumulative

experiences (Wehmeyer and Webb, 2012:3; Wehman, 2006:4) that occur in the lives of people as they move from one school environment to another. Therefore the concept of transition implies movement and change. Such change can take various forms such as change over time, change of systems of doing things like curriculum change, change of personnel/staff, changes in body size, change of practices and traditions and so on. Movement would see learners moving from one section of a school to another, from one grade to another, as well as personal academic and literacy growth. As such learners in transition are bound to confront new situations that call for skills and knowledge acquired in a previous phase. The new situations come with certain demands and challenges that require an array of knowledge and skill sets to function successfully.

We experience many transitions during our lives (Makunye, 2009; Fabian and Dunlop, 2007; Wehmeyer and Webb, 2012). Fabian and Dunlop (2007:1) propose that the way in which transitions are experienced not only makes a difference to children in the early months of a new situation, but may also have much longer-term impact, because the extent to which they feel successful in the first transition is likely to influence subsequent experiences. Some transitions are normative and predictable (vertical) whereas others are individual-specific, occurring at some specific and predictable point in time (horizontal). Vertical transitions are associated with life events (Wehmeyer and Webb, 2012) such as beginning school, leaving pre-school to join the mainstream school system, moving from one school phase to another and movement from school to college/university as well as changing from an educational setting into a workplace situation. Horizontal transition refers to movement from one situation or setting to another. Coordinated planning for these transitions can minimize anxiety that may arise and thus make such transitions smoother.

Currently educational transition is defined as the process of change of environment and set of relationships that children develop from one setting or phase of education to another over time (Fabian and Dunlop, 2007:3). Transitions are characterized by phases of concentrated learning and accelerated development in a social context (Welzer, 1993). In the next section I outline the ecological systems model as my theoretical framework and show how it relates to transition.

2.3 Transition and Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Theory

Transition has been studied internationally using several theoretical concepts. Some of the theories include 'attachment or stress' theory (Griebel and Niesel, 2000:1) which largely focuses on the multiple demands and expectations concerning children as well as parents and the school itself. 'Life-course' theory (Elder, 2001) also offers perspectives into transition, with its focus on the experiences of children in the context of family, social change and the individual lives of children. Life-course theory places children and families in the context of the social structures, cultures and populations which affect them over time and place (Elder, 2001).

Other theoretical perspectives also offer insight into ideas about transition. 'Maturational' theories (Peters, 2000), with their concerns with readiness for school as well as readiness tests provide insights that inform our understanding of the physical and academic transitional processes. Similarly, 'communities of practice' theory (Wenger, 1998) and its concerns with people learning within familiar territories where they are considered to be, and consider themselves as being, competent learners, is instructive. In this theory learners are assumed to transition better if they are encouraged and supported by capable members of the community, sharing common goals and having meaningful relations. The theory has a foundational base in three basic concepts; negotiation of meaning, participation and reification.

There are, also, other ways to construct transition such as seeing it as 'border crossing' (Campbell Clark, 2000) where physically going between two domains or cultures demarcates a border between two worlds. It can also be constructed as 'rites of institution' where it is necessary to transpose the 'symbolic capital' gained at home, to school. These rites of passage would include rites of separation, rites of transition and rites of incorporation (Fabian, 2002). The 'rites of institution' seems to emphasize the importance of incorporating the individual into the group. There is also the 'critical life events' theory (Filipp, 1995) which considers the appraisal of critical events as important in itself and that it is the coping processes that make it a transition (Fabian and Dunlop, 2007).

All the above theoretical considerations are useful in the study of transition from the foundation phase to the intermediate phase. However, underpinning much of the current thinking on transitions research (Dockett and Perry, 2003; Fulcher, 2007; Elder, 2007) has been the ecological systems model of development proposed by Bronfenbrenner (1979, 1994; 2005) which sees the child as part of a process of interaction influencing her/his development. Bronfenbrenner (1994: 190) states:

> The characteristics of the person at a given time in his or her life are a joint function of the characteristics of the person and of the environment over the course of that person's life up to that time.

To Bronfenbrenner the systems in the child's immediate environment have a strong influence on the child. The people in these microsystems have the most immediate effect on the child, and if the relations in the immediate environment break down this will cause the child difficulty in exploring other parts of his/her environment. As Dockett and Perry (2007: 9) advise, "children exist within a web of meaningful social relationships; what is important to them and what they know derives from the interactions within these relationships." After rigorous consideration it

was decided that the ecological model of transition would be particularly useful in understanding transition in the primary school in the South African context. Thus, the ecological systems theory became the lens through which this project was constructed. The main reason for this is its acknowledgement of the shared responsibility of all the stakeholders and the dynamic nature of the relationships involved in the transitional literacy process. In tandem with the ecological systems model, the sociocultural approach to literacy was also considered to be important, and the combination of the two approaches was decided as providing a sound theoretical focus for the study.

This study considers transition as an ecological concept (Bronfenbrenner, 2005) comprising a series of nested structures (microsystems) linked together in a network (the mesosystem) and influenced by the wider society (the macrosystem). In other words transition is viewed as involving an interlocking set of systems comprising home, preschool, foundation phase, intermediate phase, high school, university and the workplace with each as a macrocosmic system in itself, through which children travel in their educational lives. Bronfenbrenner (in Fabian and Dunlop, 2007:1) states that "an ecological transition occurs whenever a person's position in the ecological environment is altered as the result of a change in role, setting or both." This, he says, is important because public policy (the macrosystem) has the power to affect the well-being and development of human beings by determining the conditions of their lives.

In his ecological systems theory Bronfenbrenner (2005) outlines the interconnection between the immediate environment and what he terms proximal processes. These proximal processes are outlined as critical factors in human transition in what has become known as the process-person-context-time model (PPCT). The emphasis on process and inter-relatedness give rise to the term 'ecological' since process is seen as that which could explain the connection between some

aspect of context or some aspect of the individual and an outcome of interest. I consider each aspect of Bronfenbrenner's most recent version of the ecological systems theory, particularly the PPCT model, below.

2.3.1 Process

In Bronfenbrenner's later version of the theory the first concept that plays a crucial role is the proximal process, which he viewed as the "primary engine of development". On the role of process Bronfenbrenner and Morris (1998: 996) write:

> Human development takes place through a process of progressively more complex reciprocal interaction between an active, evolving bio-psychological human organism and the persons, objects, and symbols in its immediate external environment. To be effective, the interaction must occur on a fairly regular basis over extended periods of *time*. Such enduring forms of interaction in the immediate environment are referred to as *proximal processes*.

The nature of the proximal processes, however, varies according to aspects of the individual and of the context – both spatial and temporal (Bronfenbrenner, 2005; Bronfenbrenner and Morris, 1998). This proposition is explained thus:

> The form, power, content, and direction of the proximal processes effecting development vary systematically as a joint function of the characteristics of the *developing person*; of the *environment* – both immediate and more remote – in which the processes are taking place; the nature of the *developmental outcomes* under consideration; and the social continuities and changes occurring over *time* through the life course and the historical period during which the person has lived (Bronfenbrenner and Morris, 1998:996, italics in original).

Bronfenbrenner suggests examples of enduring patterns of proximal process as those found between teacher-child, and child-child activities, group or solitary play, reading, learning new

skills, studying, athletic activities and performing complex tasks (Bronfenbrenner, 1994). As such, the ecological systems theory is fundamental in the attempt to understand how educational processes and systems work to attain whatever outcome they are designed to attain. As such, the theory frames transition as a necessary and enduring process of both human and in this case literacy development which, then, becomes the central concern of this study. If process is critical to development, then the transitional literacy process would best be viewed and understood through examining it within the framework of the ecological systems theory.

2.3.2 Person

Bronfenbrenner acknowledged the relevance of biological and genetic influence (Tudge, Mokrova, Hatfield and Karnik, 2009:200) in terms of what the individual brings with them into the educational situation. He divided these characteristics into three types which he termed *demand*, *resource* and *force* characteristics. Demand characteristics refer to individual stimulus characteristics. These factors act as an immediate stimulus to another person, such as age, gender, physical appearance, skin colour and dress. By contrast, resource characteristics are not immediately apparent although sometimes they are induced. They relate to mental and emotional resources such as past experiences, skills, intelligence as well as social and material resources (Tudge et al, 2009; Bronfenbrenner and Morris, 1998). Finally force characteristics have to do with differences in temperament, motivation, persistence and so on. According to Bronfenbrenner two children may have equal resource characteristics but their developmental routes will be different if one is motivated to succeed and persists in tasks and the other is not motivated. To him the individual has a role in changing his/her context/situation. The person is a participant in the transition process, being either active or passive.

This study views learners as active agents in their own transition. Their resources such as language and literacy skills, motivational levels, their attitude to learning, and their general view of the learning process are critical to transition and literacy learning. As such the force, resource and demand factors of the curriculum and those of its drivers (teachers, administrators, etc.) need to be in congruence with the 'person' characteristics of the learners if transition is to be successful.

2.3.3 Context

The environment or context involves four interrelated systems. The first is the *microsystem*. Bronfenbrenner (1994:39) defines a microsystem as;

> a pattern of activities, social roles and interpersonal relations experienced by the developing person in a face-to-face setting with particular physical, social and symbolic features that invite, permit or inhibit engagement in sustained, progressively more complex interactions with, and activity in, the immediate environment.

The innermost structure is the individual (Lewthwaite, 2011). It is within the immediate environment of the microsystem that proximal processes are influential to enhance progress but their power to do so depend on the content and structure of the microsystem.

The second context is the *mesosystem*. The mesosystem comprises the linkages and processes taking place between two or more settings containing the developing person (Bronfenbrenner, 1994: 40). An example here could be the relations between one class and the greater school or relations between systems in one school and another school just next to it. It is in this context that I use the term in this study. In other words a mesosystem is a system of microsystems. Relations between the home and school also fall in the mesosystem.

The third context is the *exosystem*. The exosystem comprises the linkages and processes taking place between two or more settings, at least one of which does not contain the developing person, but in which events occur that indirectly influence processes within the immediate setting in which the developing person is active (Bronfenbrenner, 1994:40). This could imply the relations between a school and its administrative district offices or the school and non-governmental organizations working within the district. The influence of the district offices is an exosystem to learners and their teachers since the learners and teachers have no direct contact with the district offices but are indirectly affected by instructions and actions of their administration with whom both the children and teachers eventually meet.

The fourth system of the context is the *macrosystem*. This consists of the overarching pattern of micro, meso and exosystems characteristic of the culture or subculture, and embedded in the broader systems. The macrosystem may be thought of as a societal blueprint for a particular people. The macrosystem envelops the remaining systems, influencing (and also being influenced by) all of them.

Bronfenbrenner (1994) sees the child's ecology as composed of a layer of multi-connected systems all of which have some degree of effect on the child and his/her development. Relationships in these nested layers are bi-directional, so adults affect children's behaviour, but children are also active participants in the process. Particular attention is paid to those components of the environment that foster or impede with the development of proximal processes (Bronfenbrenner and Morris, 1998:995).

2.3.4 Time

The final element of the PPCT model is time. Time is a critical factor in transition. Time as well as timing is as important as the process, the person and the context. This is also because all transition, as I have defined in this chapter, relates to movement, relative consistency or change over time. Bronfenbrenner (1994) uses the term *chronosystem* to refer to time, which encompasses change or consistency not only in the characteristics of the person but also of the environment in which that person lives. Clearly, time was a factor in this study in that the study was carried out when curriculum change was also taking place.

In fostering development one must take into account learners' personal attributes, the context in which the development takes place, the time at which the development process is occurring, and the processes each person experiences (Lewthwaite, 2011:10). Simply put, things need to come together just at the right time for an individual to develop.

Bronfenbrenner's theory is quite broad, complex and would require huge resources and lengthy periods of study (longitudinal studies) to fully apply in any one study. As such I have selected and used a limited set of concepts from the PPCT model as a lens to analyze and present data on transitional issues in this study. For example, this study does not investigate learners' and teachers' out-of-school networks, global systems and personal attribute factors of learners.

Bronfenbrenner (2005: 211 & 217) proposes a series (fifty) of hypotheses on transition and two are significant for this study. Hypothesis 27 states that "the developmental potential of a setting in a mesosystem is enhanced if the person's initial transition into that setting is not made alone." Hypothesis 42 states that "upon entering a new setting, the person's development is enhanced to the extent that valid information, advice, and experience relevant to one setting are made available, on a continuing basis, to the other."

The two hypotheses emphasize the importance of a seamless transition and the need for systems to communicate with each other. In this way the transition can be seen in terms of the influence of contexts (home, school phases) and the connections between these contexts (foundation phase-home relationships, intermediate phase-home relationships, foundation-intermediate phase relationships) across time.

2.4 Contextualizing the Ecological Systems Model

The ecological systems model can be theorized in relation to transition in the primary school and how the different systems relate to one another in that context. In this section I explore the relationships between the different systems and their relation to the child in the classroom.

The model depicted in Figure 2.1 is a graphic illustration of an ecological perspective to transition adapted from Pianta and Cox (1999:6).

Fig 2.1 Influential Relationships of Learners in Transition

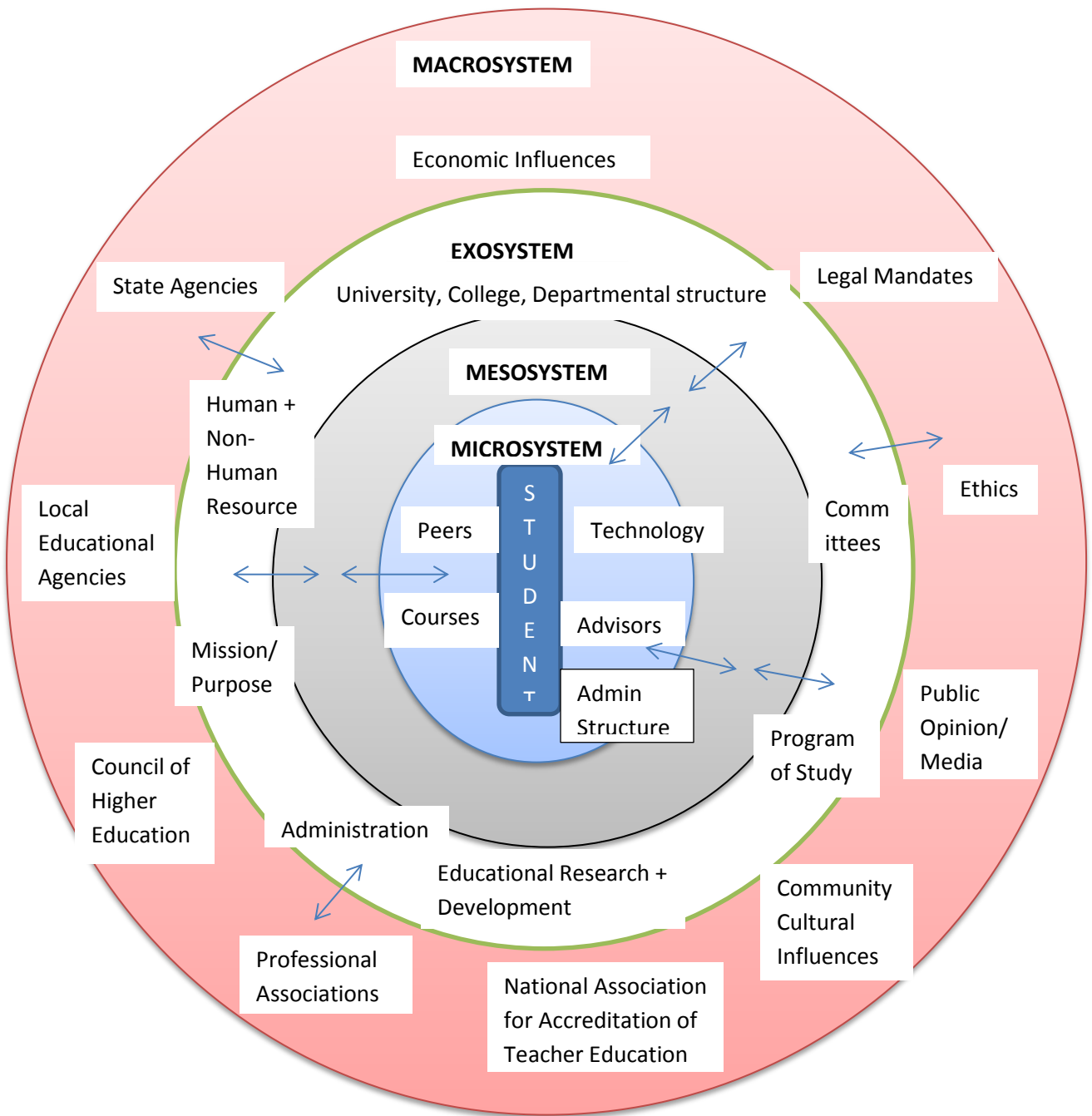Foundation Phase   Intermediate Phase
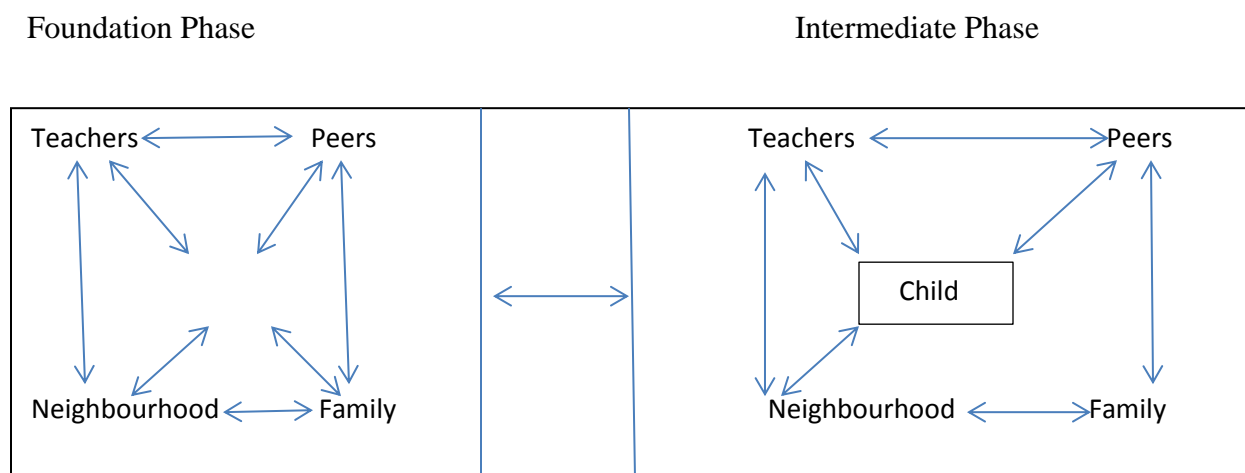
The model above shows the bi-directional relationships between microsystems that have an influence on the child as they transition from the foundation to the intermediate phase. The

ecological theory informs us that these microsystems are also interlinked to other subtle and external/distant systems (mesosystems) which have relative influence on the child. As such, this study posits that a greater understanding of transition can be achieved by looking at the different contexts that influence children's academic and intellectual development and the interrelations between these contexts over time. This is in line with the views of Fabian and Dunlop (2002:149) who argue that, "presented as a systems approach on an ecological model, our conceptual framework is transformed, and our contention that children, teachers and parents might co-construct transitions can be seen in context." As such the context is critical for a complete analysis of the forces at play during transition.

Bronfenbrenner (2005) perceives the application of his model to the field of education. Human development is at the heart of education (Lewthwaite, 2011) and such development, or the phenomenon of continuity and change, should be responsive to context. Education cannot afford to be static. Teacher development, curriculum development, and learner development occur across the education sector often in response to identified needs.

Figure 2.2 shows the ecological model, with minimal modification, as presented by Bronfenbrenner (1994). The arrows link one system with the other in its proximal zone. The arrows are bidirectional to illustrate the interdependence between systems in terms of their influence on the child and the child's reciprocal influence on them.

Fig. 2.2 The Ecological Systems Theory by Bronfenbrenner (1994)

MACROSYSTEM

Economic Influences

EXOSYSTEM

University, College, Departmental structure

State Agencies

Legal Mandates

MESOSYSTEM

MICROSYSTEM

Human + Non-Human Resource

Ethics

Local Educational Agencies

Peers

S T U D E N T

Technology

Comm ittees

Courses

Advisors

Mission/ Purpose

Admin Structure

Public Opinion/ Media

Council of Higher Education

Administration

Program of Study

Educational Research + Development

Community Cultural Influences

Professional Associations

National Association for Accreditation of Teacher Education

The ecological systems theory allows the enquirer to visualize the complex dynamics in different contexts and supports the importance of a systematic description of the setting in which development takes place, and the relationships between these settings. Figure 2.2 has been

adapted to suit the South African educational context. In figure 2.3 I summarize diagrammatically the ecological systems model by Bronfenbrenner while also aligning it to this study.

Fig. 2.3 An adapted summary of Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Model.

Ideologies

Wider influences

Rights and Responsibilities

Culture

Information

Social values

F/phase

HF

Interventions, Parental Employment, Housing, Health care, Social Services, Programmes, Local Education Policies, Re-organization, Local Community

Chd/Tr

Home

IF

HI

Social Institutions

Employment

Inter/phase

MESOSYSTEM

EXOSYSTEM

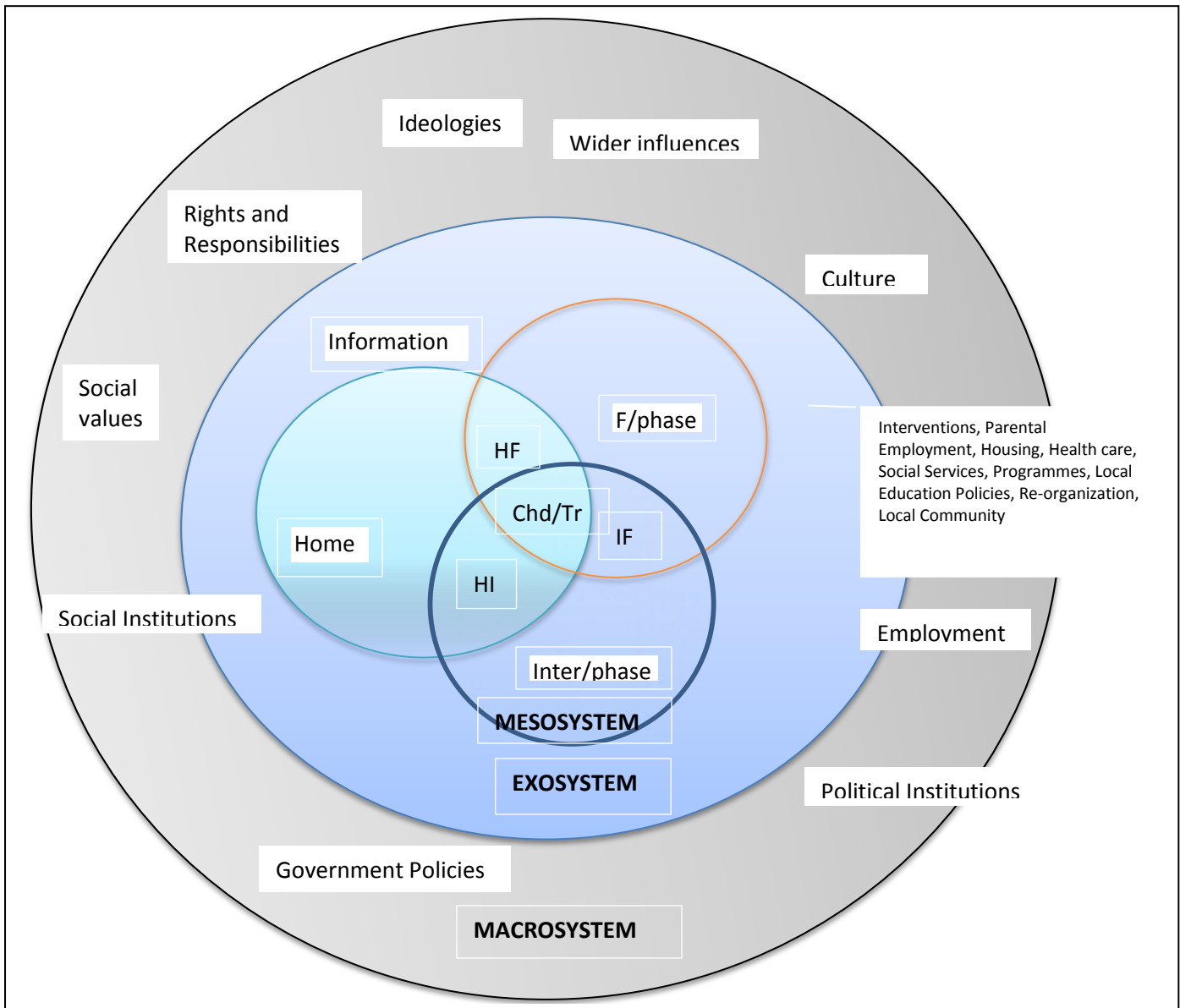Political Institutions

Government Policies

MACROSYSTEM

Figure 2.3 shows the interplay between the home, foundation phase and intermediate phase on the grade 3 child. In the diagram HI represents the home-intermediate phase, HF represents

home-foundation phase and IF represents the intermediate-foundation phase interplays. Child-teacher interactions with the curriculum (Chd/Tr) in the classroom are located at the intersection of those three subsystems of the mesosystem and, thus, constitute the microsystem. Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory is useful in helping us understand that optimal development occurs through strong meso to microsystem links. The ecological systems model is helpful in reflecting the possible agency of children in the transition process (Fabian and Dunlop, 2007) as well as being active participants in the research process. By locating the classroom and its players in the centre of the multiple forces impinging what goes on in the classroom, it accords a prominent role to the child's agency, and thinking about human agency, which ultimately highlights the possibilities for children, families and professionals as agents of change (Cairney, 1998; Makunye, 2009; August, 2002), rather than subjects of transition factors (Fabian and Dunlop, 2007) outside their influence.

2.5 Facilitating Phase Transition

Unless transition is carefully planned and handled, learners' performance is likely to decline (August, 2002; McGee, 1989; Braund and Hames, 2005; Sanacore and Palumbo, 2009; Chall, Jacobs and Baldwin, 2003; Cairney, et al, 1998) with the effects being most enduring on the least able (Hill, Holmes-Smith and Rowe, 1993). Braund and Hames (2005) offer two kinds of explanations for this decline and for the fact that it is worse at grade 4:

- A new, larger and more challenging environment, new friendship groupings, more teachers and new rules all make demands on incoming learners,

- The 'shock of the new' for learners after movement, in terms of changes in pedagogy, may have a much more significant and long term impact on learners in grade 4 and their attitude to learning.

The process of enhancing transition, therefore, involves the participation and coordination of school programmes, adult agency services and natural support (Halpern, 1994) in the school system. An element of successful transition is the coordination that can and should occur among key parties involved in the transition itself. Such coordination requires ongoing cooperation, collaboration and at the very least, communication. Wehmeyer and Patton in Wehmeyer and Webb (2012: 8) provide useful guidelines for seamless transition processes as follows:

- Transition efforts should start early.

- Planning must be comprehensive.

- Planning process must consider students' preferences and interests.

- The transition planning process should be considered a capacity-building activity.

- Students' participation throughout the process is essential.

- Family involvement is desired, needed and crucial.

- The transition planning process must be sensitive to diversity.

- Supports and services are useful and we all use them.

- Community based activity provides extremely beneficial experiences.

- Timing is crucial if certain linkages are to be made and a seamless transition achieved.

- Ranking of transition needs must occur for students with extensive sets of challenges.

It is useful to use these guidelines to understand how institutions undertake and guide learners through phase transition in schools. The presence of or planning and implementation of transition programmes helps to explain teachers' construction of transition and literacy learning.

Given that the divisions between the foundation phase and the intermediate phase in the primary school are likely to remain for some time, some researchers have made recommendations to facilitate the transition process. Fabian and Dunlop (2012), for example, advocate the establishment of orientation programs and increased opportunities for teachers across phases to familiarize with each other's situation and practices as well as the development of extracurricular activities (Cairney, et al, 1998) during the first year of the intermediate phase to capitalize on friendship groups throughout the transition process.

Other researchers have proposed the following:

- A more gradual, or staggered, transition process (Clarkson, 1988).
- Increased information sharing between school's personnel (Jensen, 1984).
- The appointment of one primary teacher in each school to be responsible for the transition, with attention paid to social, physical environment of the school (Beazley, 1984).
- Information, tangible, social and emotional support (Kurita and Janzen, 1996).
- Improving continuity, progression and giving bridging work, i.e. academic preparedness (Makunye, 2009).

Studies of transition from learners' point of view have been carried out elsewhere. In Australia, Speering and Rennie (1996) established that during transition there is considerable re-organization of either the school, the curriculum or teacher-student relationships. They

established that learners in their study were particularly unhappy with teaching strategies used in the new grades and that they wished for teacher-student relationships of the previous years of their primary schooling.

In another study, Dunlop (2001) established that children feel acutely embarrassed by their lack of knowledge, or difficulty in finding their way around a new place, but also delight in their current abilities being recognized. Despite children coming to school able to think and reason about the world, events, people, language, number; and with a desire to learn, this can make school difficult.

Studies on the impact of transitions in early life as children enter school have largely drawn from westernized models of education in which young children have rights of access to pre-school education and care. Pre-school tends to ensure readiness to learn as well as readiness for school (Fabian and Dunlop, 2007), and a focus on educational interventions and outcomes as markers of quality. The imposition of schools on children's lives makes an artificial boundary whose effects may be detrimental on future learning and self-esteem. Thus, there is need to make smooth the transition from home to school and from one phase to another. There is increasing recognition that children are vulnerable during transitions both emotionally and pedagogically (Cleave et al, 1982).

In schools the educational philosophy, teaching style and structure of education often varies from one phase to another. Any lack of emotional well-being during transition can cause worry and stress (Fabian and Dunlop, 2007), leading to aggression, fatigue or withdrawal (Cairney et al. 1998), all of which have the potential to impair learning capacity (Featherstone, 2004). Children can become disaffected, disoriented and inhibited (Fisher, 1996), resulting in behavioral

problems which impact on motivation and relationships (Kienig, 2002). Changes in environment, resources, curriculum, institutional culture, pedagogical approaches and style of classroom interaction, all have the potential of influencing how children respond during the first or second major educational transition.

Literature on transition strongly emphasizes the point that early primary school programmes are most effective if they are part of a broader coherent framework, linking early childhood development initiatives to the child's home and to primary schooling (Lombardi, 1992). Curriculum frameworks that bridge phases of the schooling process strengthen pedagogical continuity, thereby helping to maintain enthusiasm and attendance. A highly divided day with very short periods and too many subjects (in this case nine subjects) that are presented in the abstract will work against many young learners (Fabian and Dunlop, 2007:6), particularly those who are not confident, have not had preschool experience, come to school with a different home language and are taught by incompetent teachers. When this is juxtaposed with a historically disadvantaged community background and scarce resources as is the situation in the two cases under this study, the circumstances become worrisome.

The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (2001) multi-country study looked at a range of policies and programmes related to early childhood provision and found that attention to children's transitions to school led to more policy focus on building bridges across levels including staff training, regulations, administrative departments and curricula. This notion of bridging the gap is important but so too is the notion of 'narrowing the gap' (Dunlop, 2002). The greater the differences between cultures of phases and that of the home or pre-school the greater the challenge to the child and the greater the risk of not being able to

comply with the demands of the teacher. Brooker (2002) outlines how children move from 'child in the family' to 'pupil in the school' and how the values of each system often differ.

Dunlop (2002b) in Scotland identified strategies that supported children in their transition. The study provides an example where staff works together to plan for children through making opportunities for children to start school confidently and with teachers who already had a chance to get to know each child.

Studies in Germany by Griebel and Niesel (2006) indicate that the start of school for children is a transition in which there is change of identity within each family. The study suggests that teachers and parents should 'co-construct' the transition through conversations about learning at school, what happens at school and jointly helping children negotiate their identity. In this study communication is one key to successful transition.

In Botswana Le Roux (2002) noted that San children were dropping out of school early due to difficulties associated with adjusting to conflicting values and expectations between their ethnic group and the school. Le Roux (2002) identified the importance of staff having a sociocultural understanding of their students and to view the community as a valuable resource, while at the same time opening avenues for communication.

In Mali a systematic transition from teaching in French to home language and sociocultural convergence pedagogy in lower primary is being explored, with French gradually introduced in later grades (year 6). The Department for International Development (1999) reports that children understand what they are learning, and therefore learn better.

2.6 Literacy and Transition

Sociocultural approaches to literacy include various related theories focused on the different ways in which people use literacy in context. Most of these theories are grounded in the work (Perry, 2012) of the social constructivist Vygotsky (1962; 1978, 1988). Vygotsky emphasizes the importance of the teacher and the child having the same frame of reference as well as a shared understanding of the task at hand. Sociocultural theory is quite loose due to multiple interpretations accorded to it. Some scholars incline towards the work of the anthropologist Street (1984) in Iran on how communities use literacy in their everyday lives, and that of Barton, Hamilton (2000) and others in the United Kingdom. Others focus more on what people do with literacy and the effects it has on their being (empowerment, consciousness, social justice and multiple realities). The theories in general (literacy as social practice theory, multiliteracies theory and the critical literacy theory) propose that children are active agents in their own learning and that human capacities are changed by the social and cultural factors of their environment. As such, the biological and/or environmental factors can elicit different effects depending on social and cultural considerations.

The case of sociocultural theory of literacy is developed in the works of Paulo Freire (1972; 1974), Fanon (1968) and later Street (1984, 1993, 2001, 2007), Barton and Hamilton (2000), Gee, (1996) Heath (1983, 2008) and others. These researchers have largely been concerned with how people use literacy in their everyday lives (Perry, 2012) and how different communities may practice literacy in ways different from those in the mainstream or positions of power and influence. This study adopts the conception of literacy from a new literacy studies (anthropological) point of view - as a social practice - as propounded by Street (2007) and others.

Researchers (Podmore, Sauvao and Mapa, 2003) have argued that sociocultural theory has an important place in the study of transition. This is because the theory recognizes that learning is a

collective and the tools, language and social rules may change from one society to another. The sociocultural theories of literacy (borrowing from sociolinguistics) recognize the close relationship between language, culture and literacy (Gee, 1996). Language instantiates culture (Perry, 2012), and culture is realized through language (Halliday, 1973; Bourdieu, 1991). In the words of Gee (1996: vii):

> Language always comes fully attached to 'other stuff': to social relations, cultural models, power and politics, perspectives on experience, values and attitudes, as well as things and places in the world.

Literacy as one form of language use, therefore reflects all this 'other stuff' (Perry, 2012). Literacy as a situated social practice underpins other theories within the umbrella of sociocultural theories on literacy, so I describe it in greater depth, affording it more space than the other theories. This is partly because I use the literacy as social practice theory to analyse data in this study more than I do with multiliteracies and critical literacies. So, I describe briefly these three major conceptions of literacy within this umbrella of sociocultural theories of literacy. I deliberately begin with the literacy as social practice strand as this is the theory that largely informs this study.

2.6.1 Literacy as social practice.

Literacy as social practice theory is grounded in the various ways in which people use reading and writing for different purposes in their everyday lives. Put differently, it sees literacy as what people do with reading and writing, and texts in real world contexts and why they do what they do with these (Street, 2005; Barton, Hamilton and Ivanic, 2000).

Street contrasted what he termed autonomous and ideological models of literacy. Street's (1984) ideological model enables substantial treatment of literacy issues in this study. The ideological

model sees literacy as embedded in a social context (Hamilton et al, 1994), and is closely related to language, power, identity and social values. As such, there are different literacies rather than one monolithic literacy, often called an autonomous view of literacy. In the autonomous model – under which most formal literacy instruction operates – literacy is assumed to be a set of neutral, decontextualized *skills* that one has or does not have (Street, 2006; Perry, 2012). Literacy is here seen as embedded in some social form, in conventions such as letter writing, figures, diagrams, shapes, style, academic texts and so on. Conversely, the ideological view conceptualizes literacy as a set of *practices* (what people do with literacy as opposed to skills) that are grounded in specific contexts and "inextricably linked to cultural and power structures in society" (Street, 1985:433). Thus, literacy can only be understood in context and cannot be established arbitrarily or uniformly for all members of the population (Street, 1984). As such, schooling is seen as a social practice or rather an amalgam of social practices (Cairney et.al, 1998).

The sociocultural approach to literacy as encapsulated in the ideological model attempts to understand literacy in terms of concrete social practices and to theorize it in terms of the ideologies in which different literacy practices are embedded. Barton and Hamilton (2000:7) define literacy practices as "the general cultural ways of utilizing written language which people draw upon in their lives." Thus, literacy is constructed as "a set of social processes in which particular socially constructed technologies are used within particular institutional frameworks for specific social purposes" (Street, 1984:97). As such the teaching of literacy occurs in a sociocultural context, and this can be understood in terms of the beliefs, conventions, habits and interpretations of what literacy is that teachers and learners inculcate in one another.

One needs to understand what schools, teachers and learners call reading/writing and the ideological underpinnings that inform their practice and experiences. The literacy *events*, defined

as the observable activities where literacy has a role (Barton and Hamilton, 2000) to which people are exposed and the meanings they make from those activities, require a broad framework of sociocultural analysis for sense to be made of the events (Street, 1984; Hamilton et al, 1994). The insights and perspectives of literacy that learners and users have are at the centre of research about literacy (Hamilton et al, 1994) and hence literacy research should start from the insights and experiences of the learners themselves.

Literacy occurs in an ideological and sociocultural context as a tool with which different languages and communities deal with the circumstances, demands, needs and challenges around them. Yet school literacies often fit in the autonomous model. As such, ideological positions of institutions, particularly teachers and curriculum planners, determine what literacy events and practices take place in the classroom. The texts that learners are exposed to, their content and the ways these are made available to them all point to a specific ideological position of the system that propagates it. The elements, technical or functional, that teachers see as important are the ones inculcated in learners. It is through this model that this study sought to interrogate transition and literacy in transition. As such, the practices, conventions and social forms occurring in the classroom were central to this study as learners transitioned from foundation to intermediate phases.

2.6.2 Multiliteracies Theory

The multiliteracies theory is derived, but yet distinct, from the theory of literacy as social practice (Cope and Kalantzis, 2000). The theory also places emphasis on real world contexts and the power of relationships in shaping literacy and literacy learning (Perry, 2012; Paxton, 2007). The theory of multiliteracies differs from literacy as social practice in two significant ways. The

first argument deals with "the multiplicity of communication channels and media" while the second centres on "the increasing salience of cultural and linguistic diversity," (Cope and Kalantzis, 2000:5).

The notions of multiliteracies and multiple literacies (Street, 2008; Barton and Hamilton, 2005) are useful tools with which to understand how learners transition from foundation to intermediate phase. The multiliteracies view of literacy focuses on modes (also called design elements or semiotic systems) of representation that are much broader than language alone, and hence the focus is on multimodality rather than practices surrounding print literacy. The modes could be written-linguistic, visual, audio, spatial, or gestural (Healy and Honan, 2004:21). Kress and van Leeuwen (in Barton and Hamilton, 2005) assert that print literacy always exists alongside a range of other modes of meaning making, in particular visual meaning making, and that literacy is but one part of a range of semiotic resources, each with its specific affordances. Speech, visuals, numerical information and other symbolic systems are always around the learner in the classroom. The view here is that print literacy is just one of many other forms of representation and meaning making, and that one has been and continues to be privileged above other forms in schooling.

The way literacy as social practice theory conceptualizes text is quite disparate to that of the multiliteracies theory. As a result multiliteracies is often associated with the term new literacies (Street, 2007; Perry 2012, Knobel and Lankshear, 2007) because of its strong association with new technologies and new ways of representing meaning. Some scholars (Green, 1997) suggest that the concept of multiliteracies – related to technological, health, information, media, visual, scientific and other contexts – is better suited to academic studies. Emphasis is placed not only on reading and writing, but also on skills, literacy events that occur in the classroom and the

literacy practices that are relevant to the changing dynamics of school life. This has significant implications for pedagogy and instructional design.

2.6.3 Critical Literacy

Critical literacy theorists critique both power and empowerment (Moje and Luke, 2009; Lewis, Enciso and Moje, 2007) and also include issues of agency and identity (Hagood, 2002). Literacy is seen as consciousness (Freire and Macedo, 1987, Luke and Freebody, 1999; Vasquez, 2004, Dyson, 2003). Hagood (2002) sums up the critical literacy dimension when he writes thus;

> What is central to critical literacy that focuses on identity is the influence of the text and specifically of identities in texts on the reader. The text, imbued with societal and cultural structures of race, class, and gender, marks the site of the struggle for power, knowledge, and representation (p. 250-251).

To Moje and Luke (2009) the construct of identity foregrounds the actor or agent in literate and social practices. To critical literacy theorists identities mediate, and are mediated by, the texts that individuals read, write and talk about, and that a theoretical focus on identity is crucial, not to control the identities produced, constructed, formed or enacted by students (Perry, 2012:61), but to avoid controlling identities (Moje and Luke, 2009: 433). Thus literacy empowers both teachers and learners and becomes a vehicle for social justice. I return to the issues of agency and identity later in this chapter.

2.7 Sociocultural Contributions to Understanding of the Second Language Classroom

If we were to view literacy as a social practice, not simply a technical and neutral skill, then it would become apparent that it is always embedded in socially constructed epistemological principles. The ways in which teachers address reading and writing would themselves be seen as rooted in their conceptions of knowledge, identity and being. Literacy, in this sense, is always

contested, both its meanings and its practices, hence particular versions of it are always ideological, they are always rooted in a particular world view and a desire for that view of literacy to dominate and marginalize others (Gee, 1990). From this perspective, then, it is not valid that literacy can be given neutrally and then its social effects only experienced or added on afterwards.

Lantolf (2007:1) argues that the most fundamental concept of sociocultural theory is that the human mind is mediated. Citing the work of Vygotsky (1987), Lantolf posits that humans do not act directly on the physical world but rely on tools and labour activities which allow us to change the world. He writes:

> We also use symbolic tools, or signs, to mediate and regulate our relationships with others and with ourselves and thus change the nature of these relationships. Physical as well as symbolic (or psychological) tools are artifacts created by human culture(s) over time and are made available to succeeding generations… included among symbolic tools are numbers and arithmetic systems, music, art, and above all language (Lantolf, 2007:1).

From this view, humans use language to mediate facts and to understand the world. Thus learners require a reasonably developed language for them to mediate facts and content, since it is language that enhances the integration of symbolic artifacts into thinking. If well mediated by language, a learner can employ higher mental capacities, both for interpersonal (interaction) and intrapersonal (thinking) purposes, which include voluntary attention, intentional memory, planning, logical thought and problem solving, learning and evaluation of the effectiveness of these processes.

Sociocultural theory preoccupies itself with how people inherit certain traits/practices from others. It clearly rejects that thinking and speaking are one and the same thing. It rejects the

communicative view of language where thinking and speaking are completely independent phenomena. It sees thinking and speaking as interrelated in a dialectic unity in which publicly derived speech completes privately initiated thought. They work in unity just as oxygen and hydrogen work together to extinguish fire whereas each working independently would fuel or enhance combustion. What is required is a unity of analysis that preserves 'the dialectic unity of the elements' of speaking and thinking (Lantolf, 2007:7).

2.8 Criticism of Sociocultural Theory

Sociocultural theory has not been without criticism. The theory has often been criticized for neglecting the individual (Renshaw, 1998; Sawyer, 2002) and paying little attention to issues of individual differences that children bring to the classroom. Such difference ranges from the different responses that children give to school activities to their different voices on topics. As such, the individual is constructed as "using cultural tools in interaction with others" (Renshaw, 1998:97. In so doing the theory adopts socialist principles even in a capitalistic world, with its focus on communities at the expense of individual identity.

Socioculturalists argue that the individual cannot be meaningfully separated from the social and cultural context of learning. As such the theory does not offer adequate guidance on pedagogy, resulting in the theory not according the learner the power he/she deserves. Actually, the theory was not developed from classroom based research but rather bigger social contexts. As such it focuses on situated social practices and denies that one can study individuals or social contexts separately (Sawyer, 2002). Such a rejection of the individual as a unit of analysis in favour of an action or event makes the theory open to criticism. Learning is conceived as a property of the group, not the individual participant.

The main focus of the theory is on cultural practices, yet there is no consistent theoretical conception of what 'cultural practices' are – they are variously interpreted as activity, context, event and situation (Sawyer, 2002). As such the theory has often been criticized for not having an adequate theory of social structure and how it constrains and enables individuals.

2.9 Interim Literacies and Transition in the South African Context

In order to understand transition in the South African context I consider the works of McDonald and Burroughs (1991) in what is called the threshold project, and that of Paxton (2007) in a study on first year economics students at the University of Cape Town, South Africa.

In a study on bilingual education in South Africa, with special focus on how English courses taught to African children from sub B (grade 2) to standard 2 (grade 4) prepared learners for the English they need when English becomes the medium of instruction from grade 5 (at that time), McDonald and Burroughs (1991) observed that learners' literacy skills in listening, speaking, reading and writing were poorly developed in both the first and second languages. The two researchers also found that children did not have adequate English to cope with the demands of standard 3, and that the English level at standard 3 was below passing level for standard 2 English-as-a-subject. Also from this study was the observation that the task of learning to read was the biggest challenge faced by African children when they enter school. As such, the researchers recommended what they called a 'transition learning situation' (McDonald and Burroughs, 1991:8).

Despite Paxton's (2007) study being carried out at university level, there is important relevance between this study and mine. The literacy issues established by the study inform of some challenges that may also affect, or whose origins may be traced back to, lower levels of

schooling. First year university studies are as much the beginning of a new phase as grade 4 is. But, before doing so I need to clarify one other technical term cogent to the understanding of interim and transitional literacies, which is 'discourses'. Kress (1985:70 defines discourses as:

> - Systematically-organized sets of statements which give expression to the meanings and values of an institution. Beyond that, they define, describe and delimit what it is possible to say (and by extension what it is possible to do or not do) with respect to the area of concern of that institution.

Gee (1996) further distinguishes between primary and secondary discourses. Primary discourses are those meanings which people acquire early in life in the family home, whereas secondary discourses are those acquired from institutions outside the home such as at church, school and the office. Academic discourse is therefore often referred to as a secondary discourse. As such primary discourses form the foundation for the acquisition of secondary discourses and they shape the form that acquisition and learning shall take. Following this distinction Gee defines literacy as 'mastery or fluent control … over a secondary discourse' (1996:143).

Paxton (2007) found that first year students did not acquire the required discourses of the course and she coined the term interim literacies to reflect a transition process from school and home to academic literacy. Among the features of interim literacies are intertextuality, avoiding terminology from the new discourse and lack of coherence. Intertextual features were noted in the form of clause chaining, repetition, rhetorical questioning and the use of first and second person clauses. In each case prior discourses scaffold acquisition of the new.

In avoiding terminology from the new discourse, Paxton (2007) found that learners often get to an interim stage where they are hesitant to borrow misunderstood terms and learning to use those terms appropriately. At this stage the students don't fully understand the terms and don't feel

comfortable using them; they have not yet assimilated the discourse. Often words resist, others remain alien and sound foreign in the mouth of one who has appropriated them

The concept of interim literacies seems useful in a context of increasing cultural and linguistic diversity where students draw on a range of other discourses as they learn to make meaning in a new discourse. It also seems appropriate in a context of changing socio-political and policy contexts such as the situation in South Africa. It allows one to understand language and meaning making as a dynamic resource, constantly being adapted and transformed by its users.

Paxton (2007) observes that metaphors such as interim literacies risk being used to label students as interim, marking them and never allowing them to move beyond this stage. In this way interim literacies may be used to mean that learners are at some stage only in the interim period. Used this way it could be argued that at foundation level where writers and readers are gaining access to entirely new discourses and genres, all language and literacy practices/usages could be considered interim. Therefore, the term interim must imply fluidity, a sense of movement and change. This way it comes in tandem with my conception of transitional literacies. The traces of prior discourses and discourse strategies as means for scaffolding the learner from one level to the other is a distinctive feature of what I have called transitional literacy.

The concept of interim literacies appears to be informed by the work of Kress (2000:154) who argues that the resources of representation are in constant flux, so we need to see individuals not as mere users of a system but as transformers, and that changes in use and form take place constantly and that remaking reflects individual interest on the one hand and social history and cultural issues on the other. His notion of interest ensures that the agency of the maker is recognized. Such makers are working within fields of power with historically shaped resources.

Paxton also draws from the work of Fairclough (1989) who calls for an interpretation of the social processes that give rise to the production of the text as well as of the historical conditions within which participants are situated. The concept thus reminds us that acquisition of academic discourse is not a straight forward, single track process.

A second feature of interim literacies is the ways in which students mimic the new discourses by reproducing chunks of them in their work. Also, students deliberately avoid the use of new terminology, often stemming from a resistance of the new terms/words. So, teaching to support meaning making must be an on-going process. Teachers need to take a very critical look at their own teaching methodologies and ask whether appropriate scaffolds are in place for taking students beyond the interim stage. Interim literacies depict a transitional stage characterized by stagnation and discomfort with subject content, which links with the thrust and focus of this study.

2.10 A Performance Plateau in Grade 4

There is a general performance plateau when learners move from grade 3 to grade 4 (Sanacore and Palumbo, 2009; Cairney et al, 1998; Green, 1997). This phenomenon is generally known as the grade 4 slump (Chall, 1996). The term 'slump' connotes a drop in performance whereas my preferred term 'plateau' implies a lull in growth. This is a major problem throughout the school system across the world and requires a thoughtful response from educators. Researchers found that second language learners enter the upper primary school grades without the necessary skills required to deal with and comprehend large amounts of expository or informational texts and related vocabulary across the curriculum. At the same time, text books were found to be packed

with content specific vocabulary and concepts that are often different from students' personal language and awareness of the world (Green, 1997; Sanacore and Palumbo, 2009).

Because word knowledge is highly correlated with reading comprehension, children who lacked vocabulary knowledge (learners from low income families) were found to have difficulty comprehending content area resources. Citing Gregg and Sekeres (2006), Sanacore and Palumbo (2009) concluded that these students were expected to read and comprehend increasing amounts of expository discourse in upper primary and secondary schools, but because they did not have substantial experience with informational resources and related vocabulary, they were less likely to have acquired the necessary skills needed for understanding expository text.

Another cause for the fourth grade slump was found to be the difficulty learners have in selecting reading materials that interest them. An important part of becoming an effective reader is to have easy access to a wide variety of narrative and informational resources written at different reading and interest levels and to engage daily in actual in-school reading for at least 90 minutes (Allington, 2006). I make this assertion in view of the time allocation for literacy of 10 hours per week in grade 3 as stipulated in the NCS (2005) and the CAPS document (2011).

When children read materials that interest them, they are apt to read more often; to increase their awareness of content specific concepts, text structure, general word knowledge, fluency, vocabulary, phonics, writing, grammar and spelling skills; to become competent and confident in reading more challenging materials; and to continue reading as a lifetime activity (Sanacore, 2004; Dahl and Scharer, 2000; Krashen, 1993). Since the grade 4 class fell directly into my study it was important to understand teaching practices at this level and track this performance plateau

phenomenon to see the extent to which it impacts on students' learning and literacy development and why this was the case, if it was.

2.11 Reading and Writing Pedagogies and Research

This study regards reading and writing as the cornerstones of the curriculum and assumes that proper acquisition of the two ensures easier access to the rest of the curriculum to those that would have adequately absorbed these key literacy skills. Thus, studies in reading and writing illuminate other areas of the curriculum as the two skills permeate through every learning situation.

For further understanding of reading I draw on the work of Weaver (1998) and his distinction of reading at each level of the school system. Weaver (1998) identifies three conceptions of reading. The first sees reading as meaning to pronounce words. This view applies more to beginner readers in the lower grades where sounding of letters and phonemic awareness form the cornerstones of reading activities. The ability to segment, dichotomize and combine speech sounds into abstract units (phonemic awareness) is very complex (Foertsch, 2008). Reading is one of the most complex of human functions and is based upon an understanding of the alphabetic principle (Shaywitz, 2003). Reading in any language poses a challenge. With only 26 letters, each with no meaning on its own, representing a possible 5 000 syllables (Snow, Burns and Griffins, 1998), learning to read English cannot be easy to second language learners at all. Add the 22 vowel sounds for a learner who speaks a language with only 5 (or 7 for Sotho learners) vowels and the difficulty becomes apparent.

The weight of research evidence suggests that phonemic awareness is a necessary but not sufficient condition for the development of decoding and reading. Sounding out words is necessary but not sufficient to the task; the reading process is really meaning driven.

The second observation by Weaver, (1998) is that reading means identifying or recognizing words and getting their meanings. Phonics includes the teaching of particular parts of language, especially the rules for phoneme-grapheme relationships in reading. Adams (1990) concludes that instruction in phonics is a critical factor for success in early reading. However, those who view reading as a construction of meaning find this perspective to be missing particularly in regard to the sociocultural contexts of literacy (Weaver, 1998). Anderson, Hiebert, Scott and Wilkinson (1985:38) aver that "phonics instruction should aim to teach only the most important and regular of letter to sound relationships…once the basic relationships have been taught, the best way to get children to refine and extend their knowledge of letter-sound correspondences is through repeated opportunities to read."

The third conception of reading by Weaver (1998) sees it as bringing meaning to a text in order to get meaning from it. This view appears to appreciate the notion that reading is a process of interaction with text, influencing and being influenced by text. This includes developing strategies for making sense of text as well as developing letter-sound knowledge, and using both together, effectively and efficiently (Weaver, 1998). Thus reading appears to require decoding, recognizing words, and understanding meanings.

Levine's theory on writing development is a necessary tool for this study. Levine (in Nathan et al, 2009) identifies six stages of writing development as: Imitation- in which learners become aware of letters, pretend to write, order their letters and numbers, and have relatively crude motor

skills; Graphic presentation – in which learners become adept at printing letters, are preoccupied with handwriting, and use invented spellings of words; Progressive incorporation – in which they gradually incorporate standards of capitalization, punctuation, syntax and grammar, begin writing in cursive and revise their work, use writing to relate experiences rather than to solve problems or develop ideas; Automatization – in which learners apply rules of grammar, spelling, punctuation, and syntax automatically, review their own work; Elaboration – in which they begin to use writing for thinking, problem solving and remembering, synthesize ideas from a variety of sources, and use transitions, and finally; Personalization/Diversification - in which learners use styles appropriate to the subject, become more creative, vary length and complexity of sentences and write with increasingly sophisticated vocabulary. The cognitive restructuring caused by reading and writing, thus develop the higher reasoning processes involved in extended abstract thinking (Farrell, 1977:451).

Knowledge of these stages is important as it helps shape the standards and competencies for each grade. It is imperative for teachers to know the expectations at each point of the school and the levels of performance and competence expected in their learners. Transitional literacy in this study focuses at the progressive incorporation and the automatization stages of writing development.

The literature I have cited here represents a variety of responses and conceptions of literacy: some such as Adams (1993) and Snow et al. (1998) privilege a more cognitive and decontextualized account of the learning process; others such as Scribner and Cole (1978b) attempt to link cognitive processes with social practices; others locate the teaching of literacy within broader social and political contexts and are more sensitive to the variety of backgrounds and language styles that learners bring with them, rather than imposing a single standard on all

(Street and Street, 1991; Rogers, 1992); while some locate literacy within other semiotic means of communication, such as visual and gestural modes, thereby focusing on multimodality or on multiliteracies rather than on just literacy which they see as less central to the communicative needs of a globalizing world (Kress and Van Leeuwen, 2001; Hagood, 2002; Cope and Kalantzis, 2000). Cutting across all these authorities are contested issues of power and social hierarchy as they affect definitions and their outcomes for practice (Street and Lefstein, 2007).

2.12 Curriculum Policy Documents

To regulate my expectations for each grade I employed the guidance of the CAPS, (2011) and the Gauteng Primary Literacy and Mathematics Strategy (2010). These documents stipulate what is expected at each grade level in terms of literacy development. Phonemic awareness, word recognition, comprehension, vocabulary and fluency are the five components specified with regards reading and have to be taught explicitly and practiced on a daily basis (DBE, 2008) while handwriting (foundation phase) and writing as an expressive, creative activity (intermediate phase) are given preference. The Gauteng Primary Literacy and Mathematics Strategy (2010) interestingly specifies transitional level readers to focus on fluency, comprehension, word recognition and reading habits. Very little is said on the structure and development of these areas. These curriculum documents are the guiding policies for reading and writing instruction in the schools where this study was conducted.

2.13 Language Issues and Pedagogy

Language and literacy are inextricably linked. Wolf (in Department of Education, 2010:29) observes that "language is not everything in education, but without language everything is nothing". It has been argued in some quarters that language alone should constitute the core of

any curriculum (Graves, van den Broek and Taylor, 1998; Barrentine, 1999; Dyanda and Nyawaranda 2004).

The complaints over the weaknesses of the curriculum raised by both teachers and other stakeholders in education are supported by research studies suggesting that language in general should be the core of the curriculum because learners can only access knowledge, skills, concepts and attitudes in other areas when they are adequately equipped with language and literacy skills (Graves, in Dyanda 2006). Similarly, research across Africa shows that learners acquire literacy skills better and faster when these are packaged in a language they understand, that is their first language (Reeves, 2008, Schroeder, 2004).

In a country recognizing eleven official languages, with only three subjects in the foundation phase, namely literacy (languages), numeracy and life skills, it was necessary to understand how schools interpreted the meaning of the subject called literacy and understand how they teach the language(s) to develop literacy skills. Motshekga (2009; 2014) reports that there was confusion on the number of subjects taught in the foundation phase with some schools only introducing English at grade 4, a time that coincides with the requirement to transition to English as the language of instruction. This meant that in some cases there were instances where learners transitioned into English as the language of learning and teaching before they acquired the necessary literacy skills to enable them to access curriculum content through this language.

The Department of Education (DBE) (2010), Reeves et al, (2008) and Prinsloo (2008) all found that there is inconsistency between Language in Education Policy (LiEP) and NCS, (2005) with regards the grade in which a language subject should be introduced at an additional language level. In summary, the LiEP attempts to promote the use of learners' home languages in schools

as well as ensure that learners acquire an additional language of communication to facilitate the bridging of race, language and regional divides, while encouraging the respect of others' languages (DBE, 2010). On the other hand the NCS (2005) prioritized the importance of additive multilingualism and promoted the need for African languages to be taught at schools.

The interpretations of the language policy that came with the NCS (2005) had the effect of confusing educators as to how many subjects should be taught at foundation phase and at what stage English should be introduced as a first additional language subject. Some schools lowered the transition to English medium of instruction from grade 5 (as was the case prior to 1994) to grade 4, with learners meeting English as a subject at grade 3, before transitioning to English medium of instruction the following year. Others introduced English as a subject from grade one (Reeves et al, 2008; Probyn et al, 2002) and as far as pre-school in some cases (Dyanda et al, 2006) rather than increasing the transition point as the policy advocates.

Gains (2010) argues that language issues have implications for literacy research, teacher education and government policy. She points at narrow practices of literacy pedagogy of teachers. Thus, the language policy may have an effect on the amount of English pupils possess during the transition and hence affect their reading and writing skills, resulting in a fourth grade performance slump.

The acquisition–learning distinction (Krashen, 1993) enlightens us of the cognitive underpinnings that may influence teachers' approaches to language teaching and learning. Stephen Krashen argues that a learner would learn a second language well only when the learner receives adequate amounts of comprehensible input in a natural way. In Krashen's arguments comprehensible input should be followed by provision and opportunities for output through

practice such as oral presentations and written work. The acquisition-learning distinction "states simply that we acquire (not learn) language by understanding input that is a little beyond our current level of (acquired) competence" (Krashen and Terrell, 1983:32). If a learner's knowledge level is 'i', then acquisition occurs when he/she is exposed to comprehensible input that amounts to i+1, provided that he/she understands language containing 'i+1'. Since all learners cannot be at the same level of linguistic competence at the same time, Krashen suggests that natural communicative input is the key to designing a syllabus, ensuring in this way that each learner will receive some 'i+1' input that is appropriate for his/her current stage of linguistic competence. If teachers provide input at the rate of i+2, for example, comprehension becomes difficult for the learners. The teacher or speaker's aim is to be understood. Krashen (1982:22) maintains that "when communication is successful, when the input is understood and there is enough of it, i+1 will be provided automatically."

This work has significant implications for additional language teaching. The theory is a necessary tool for the researcher who seeks to understand concepts such as those in this study. The distinction between language acquisition and language learning, comprehensible input, the monitor model and the natural approach have influenced the manner in which teachers and teacher educators approach second language pedagogy. This study was conducted in a high density suburb where issues of poverty and linguistic deficit deserved attention.

Also instructive is the continua of biliteracy model by Hornberger (2004:156) which uses the notion of intersecting and nested continua to demonstrate the multiple and complex interrelationships between bilingualism and literacy. The model explores the importance of contexts, media and content through which biliteracy develops. Biliteracy in the model refers to any and all instances in which communication occurs in two (or more) languages in or around

writing. This model speaks to the context of my study in that the community, and by extension learners, spoke multiple languages and all these found reflection in the classroom (see table 6.2). The model is also relevant in that it forms the basic building blocks to break down the binary opposition between bilingualism and literacy by drawing attention to the continuity of experiences, skills, practices and knowledge funds (Hornberger, 2004:156) that learners bring into the classroom. The continua of biliteracy model also explores the intersection between first and second language, receptive and productive, oral and written skills continua through the medium of two or more languages and literacies whose linguistic structures vary from similar to dissimilar, and to which the biliterate individual's exposure varies from simultaneous to successive. Such a model is a useful tool for language and literacy data analysis in this study.

2.14 Conclusion

In this chapter I have set up both the ecological systems theory and sociocultural theory as the twin theoretical frames for looking at data in this study. Sociocultural theories of literacy are based on a set of assumptions about the centrality of communicative processes, interpersonal relationships and community membership in the formation of individual capabilities (Renshaw, 1998:97). These are the same tenets that inform the ecological systems theory.

The issue of inter-connectedness (system) as emphasized by the bio-ecological theory on one hand, and the sense of being and belonging as epitomized by sociocultural theory on the other both weave nicely with the case study methodology used in this study. The close relationship of the two theories was seen as providing complementarity in terms of their regard for the place of the learner (person) and the proximal processes the learner undergoes and experiences in their literacy journey, and over time. Also critical between the two theories is the importance of

context. Such context relates to the curricular and the linguistic in which such transition and literacy learning take place. It is in this theoretical context of interrelatedness that the study is designed.

There are very few studies on transitional literacy at the foundation-to-intermediate interface in Africa and South Africa of which I am aware. The gaps on systematic studies on learners' transition render this study important in understanding this grey area.

The next chapter is devoted to issues of the context in which this study was carried out. Because I work from the macrosystem to the exosystem, mesosystem and microsystem, the next chapter begins by describing the macro South African context as a way of illuminating/situating the micro transitional and literacy realities in the classroom. The view is that the micro can only be understood in the context of other wider factors that impinge on the goings on of the classroom.

Chapter 3: The Context: Setting the Scene

3.1 Introduction

This chapter provides the context in which this study was carried out. In his ecological systems model Bronfenbrenner (2005) reiterates the significance of proximal processes as they interact with environmental factors (context) and insists on the importance of context in understanding transition. As such, it is important to describe the transitional literacy context of the learners in this study in order to situate the issues and events in this study.

We also learn from the ecological systems model (Bronfenbrenner and Morris, 1998; Tudge et al, 2009) that time as well as timing are critical factors in studying transition. The period October 2011 to June 2012 in which this study was conducted was a period of flux in which multiple changes were taking place in education in South Africa. Events in the macro-educational environment have a bearing on what goes on in the meso-educational environment, the school, as well as the micro-events in the classroom. Such turbulence existed at various points in the education system at large, the curriculum, and the physical environment in the school, the psychological state of teachers and learners as well as at academic level. Such flux coincided with the transition from foundation to intermediate phase as learners in this study progressed to grade 4. It is also important to set out the context to enhance relevance, situatedness and clarity in order to align the sociocultural approach to literacy (Pahl and Rowsell, 2005; Street, 1983, 1993, 2001 and 2007; Barton and Hamilton, 2000) with the flexibility of case study methodology which informs this study, since both complement each other in emphasizing the significance of context.

3.2 The Design

Data in this study was collected during the period October 2011 to June 2012 so as to maximize on the multiple issues that were happening at that time. During this period South African education was moving from the National Curriculum Statements (NCS2005) to the newly introduced Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements (CAPS). Such transition meant reorganization and reshaping of the curriculum would impact on the schools' internal systems. This had an effect on what was happening in the classrooms at that time and affected learners in various ways that I discuss later in succeeding chapters. As such, the study captures a critical transitional period in the development of grade 3 learners through to grade 4 at that time.

The illustration (figure 3.1) below depicts the transitional nature of the study in terms of the movement or change in time, place, systems and experiences of learners and teachers in this study.

Figure 3.1 Multiple transitions

X	October 2011	Y
Grade 3	XY to XY	Grade 4
NCS	June 2012	CAPS
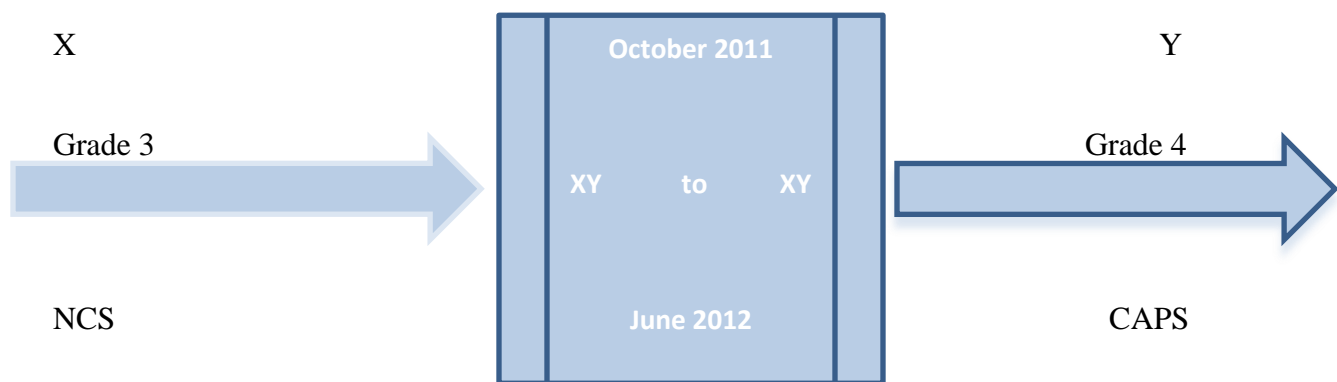
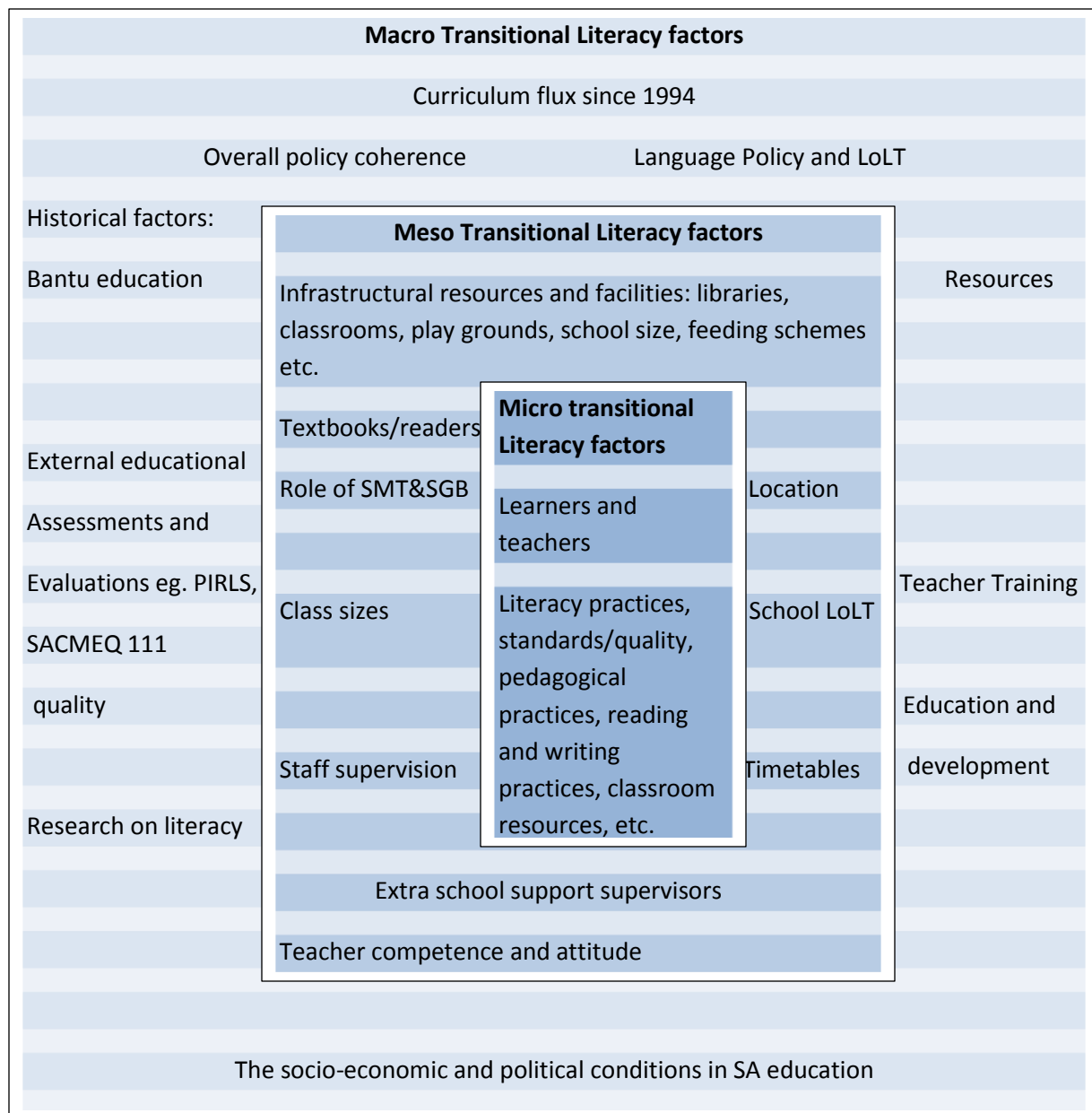*Foundation to intermediate phase transition*

X represents the experiences learners underwent during the period up to October 2011 under the NCS policy statements while in grade 3 whereas Y represents those experiences learners and teachers underwent after June 2012 in their move into the CAPS tenure. XY represents what I

have termed the transitional literacy period, the focal point of this study. The study focuses on that period between NCS being phased out and CAPS implementation which naturally coincides with learners' movement to grade 4 where there is a significant shift in the academic and literacy demands of the curriculum. The various forms of transitioning and the experiences learners underwent in relation to literacy during this period form the central concern of this study.

In order to understand what happens in the classroom and the school, one has to locate the two in other bigger contexts. As such I work from the macrosystem to the exosystem, mesosystem and finally the microsystem of the classroom. In the light of Bronfenbrenner's (1994) ecological systems theory I modelled in figure 2.3 in chapter 2 and the knock-on effect on what happens in schools today, the factors in question can be remodeled within a South African context. In figure 3.2 below I depict the interplay of factors impacting on education at this moment in South African history from an ecological lens.

Table 3.2 summarizes the transitional nature of this study in terms of the relationship between the macro-educational environment, the meso-educational issues in the schools and the micro environment of the classroom. It is important to note that transition happens at various levels. In this study I consider physical transition, psychological transition, academic transition, curricular transition and systemic transition. Bronfenbrenner and Morris (1998:278) observe that interactions among personal characteristics, proximal processes, contexts and time combine together to affect developmental outcomes. What happens in the system of education affects the school at large and eventually the learner sitting in the classroom. As Lewthwaite (2011:9) observes, if there is indeed educational development, there should be evidence of progressively more complex interaction with and activity in the environment in which the individual (learner) is located.

Figure 3.2 Transitional literacy issues impacting on education

Macro Transitional Literacy factors		
Curriculum flux since 1994		
Overall policy coherence		Language Policy and LoLT

Historical factors:

Bantu education

External educational

Assessments and

Evaluations eg. PIRLS,

SACMEQ 111

quality

Research on literacy

Resources

Teacher Training

Education and

development

Meso Transitional Literacy factors

Infrastructural resources and facilities: libraries, classrooms, play grounds, school size, feeding schemes etc.

Textbooks/readers

Role of SMT&SGB

Class sizes

Staff supervision

Location

School LoLT

Timetables

Micro transitional Literacy factors

Learners and teachers

Literacy practices, standards/quality, pedagogical practices, reading and writing practices, classroom resources, etc.

Extra school support supervisors

Teacher competence and attitude

The socio-economic and political conditions in SA education

Because this study foregrounds learner voices, it is important to illustrate the proximal processes impinging on the learner. What happens at national, district and community levels affects learners in the classroom.

3.3 Macro-transitional Factors

South African education has been in flux since the transition from apartheid education to the democratic system after 1994. Such transitions and flux are a clear response to historical and social factors. Prior to the enactment of the South African Education Act of 1996 (specifically the period between 1990 and 1996) education was beginning to respond to calls for transformation that began earlier than the democratic process of 1994. During this period the concern of the majority was to achieve a transformation of that system so that it served the interests of all South Africans in a democratic and equitable manner (Hartshorne, 1999). It is important to note at this point that such calls for reform and transformation cut across racial, religious and ethnic boundaries. The calls, criticism and general rejection of apartheid education was a clear statement that something was wrong with the education schools were offering to the children of South Africa and its attendant market.

The attainment of political democracy is inextricably linked to the attainment of equality and equity, in society and in education (Soudien & Gilmour in Weber 2008:323). Education cannot remain aloof to trends around it. As such, this period is marked by the gradual shift from the Bantu Education Act of 1953 to the South African Schools Act of 1996. Such shift from one system of education to the other continues to have an effect on education to date. When curriculum changes, a lot of things are affected which eventually affect the literacy development of learners. The transition from one curriculum to another affects teachers too. It is important to understand the relationship between the macro, the meso and the micro environment in education.

The period from March 1997 to 2000 saw the introduction of Curriculum 2005, which also brought massive organizational restructuring of education. C2005 marked a significant transition from a racist, apartheid, rote learning model of learning and teaching to a liberating, nation building and learner-centred one (Soudien and Gilmour, in Weber 2008:329; Bizos, 2009). Unfortunately the curriculum did not address the problems the country had inherited from apartheid (if ever it is the responsibility of the curriculum to cure the ills of society). As such, by the year 2000 some academics (Jansen 1999b, Muller, 2004, Harley and Parker, 1999) had begun predicting its failure, accusing it of "opaqueness" (Jansen, 1999), being based on "what ought to be" rather than "what is" (Harley and Parker, 1999:213). During this period equality appears to have been at the top of the educational agenda at the expense of other issues of significance such as curriculum content and resource provisioning. The curriculum was accused of failing particularly black pupils through the neglect of what are essentially the managerial matters of schooling; teachers, textbooks and time (Jansen, 2005:73), so it became necessary to revisit the curriculum. This marked a new shift, a new thinking and a modified national philosophy.

The revision of *C2005* to the Revised National Curriculum Statements covered the period 2001 to 2009. Here the focus began to shift towards quality, in reaction to the criticisms that had beset C2005. The next change that followed was the attempt to align the curriculum to the needs and standards of contemporary life, particularly in the 21st century. In principle, Curriculum 2005 was tailored to match any other system of education in the world (Cloete and Muller in Jansen, 2002:202) but appeared to have omitted considering the situation on the ground in terms of the historical factors, the quality of human resources available to implement such a curriculum, the infrastructural and administrative structures in place and the economic disparities of its people. There was no grace period set aside for training teachers to understand and appreciate the new

changes; schools were not upgraded to meet the needs of a new dispensation; resources were not made available to schools; administrators were not adequately trained for the new changes; methods of teaching/facilitating were hazily understood by teachers; the syllabus was obscured and in the end the learner produced could hardly read and write at the appropriate grade levels (Schleicher, 2009).

The Chisholm Commission Report (2000), established to investigate the problems bedeviling the curriculum, had among other things noted overload at both teaching and administrative levels. With nine subjects in the primary school the curriculum was bound to suffer effects of cluttering. This meant that critical skills such as the development of literacy and numeracy skills suffered. This was later confirmed by a number of studies which showed that children could not read and write at levels comparable to international benchmarks (PIRLS, 2006 and 2011; Taylor, 2012; TIMSS, 1999 and 2003; DBE, 2008; SACMEQ, 2001; HSRC, 2006; ANAs, 2010; 2011; 2012). Similarly, with too many administrative structures between the national offices and the teacher in the classroom, the policies risked misinterpretation as information cascaded down the line.

The Commission report also noted the unfriendly and exclusionary language that was used in curriculum documents. Examples identified included, among others, the obscurity of such words as teacher, subject, student, syllabus, discipline and textbook that were replaced in policy statements by terms such as facilitator, educator, learning area, learner and so on (DBE, 2009; de Klerk, 2002).

Progression, pacing and sequencing were also singled out as weaknesses in the curriculum in the Chisholm Commission report. The committee made significant changes to the curriculum and eventually named it Curriculum 21st century (C21). Even these changes were met with

challenges and were hardly implemented (Jansen, 2009). However, the new design had the effect of changing policy resulting in what was to be termed RNCS2005, and eventually NCS2005. Thus, the contribution and recommendations of the Chisholm Commission (2000) marked a new milieu in the transitional history of the curriculum.

In its recommendations to the Minister of Basic Education, the Chisholm Commission on the implementation of Curriculum 2005 (Chisholm, 2000:25) recommended that the curriculum be revised and streamlined 'as soon as possible'. In terms of the number of learning areas the committee recommended that there be three subjects in the foundation phase, namely literacy, numeracy and life skills while those in the intermediate phase be rationalised from nine to six. The committee recommended that Technology and Economic and Management Science (EMS) be scrapped. These recommendations were later repeated by the review committee on the implementation of the curriculum led by Dada in 2009. Thus, subjects in the primary school curriculum would appear as follows:

Table 3.1 Curriculum structure as recommended by the Chisholm Commission of 2000

Foundation Phase	Intermediate Phase
Literacy	1.Languages
Numeracy	2.Mathematics
Life Skills	3.NaturalSciences
	4.Social Sciences (History & Geography)
	5.Arts and Culture
	6. Life Orientation

But, by the end of 2012 subjects such as Technology and Economic and Management Sciences continued to be taught in the two schools under this study, with learners receiving results at the end of each term. As such, the two schools were still lagging behind others in terms of policy implementation.

Following criticism on the implementation of the *National Curriculum Statements* the Department of Basic Education made a further review in 2009 which resulted in a new era of curriculum change with a new curriculum. The Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (DoE, 2010) was adopted for phased implementation in 2011 to 2013 onwards. In a system historically grappling with challenges of lack of resources in education, the inadequacy of teacher training, weak design of implementation strategy and policy coherence (Jansen, 2002), the period 2011 to 2012 marks an interesting transition within the bigger educational transition. As such, this study looked at transitioning of learners from foundation to intermediate phase during the course of a transition from one curriculum to another. So, the study took place in a special period of flux.

Teachers and learners are at the centre of any curriculum transition, and any issue in education for that matter, since they are the ones who eventually have to deal with the consequences of change. If the new curriculum (CAPS) is to stand or fall it will do so on the strength or weakness of what teachers bring to the reform process (Soudien and Gilmour, in Weber 2008; Jansen, 2009).

The brief description of the transitional levels of the curriculum I have attempted to outline here shows a history of problems dating back to the apartheid era. Educational provision has been dogged by challenges and these tend to take new twists at each transition point. If it is not the

internal philosophical, ideological dynamics, relevance and credibility aspects of the curriculum itself, then it is the implementation (Taylor, 2012). If not any one of these, then its fundamental exertions (such as the difficult assessment standards in *C2005* and *NCS*) or some other flaw still to evolve. These issues appear to point at a system plagued by problems in educational delivery in democratic South Africa.

3.4 Macro-literacy Realities in South Africa

Literacy is at the centre of the primary school's existence and what it must focus on (Goodlad, 1983; Hankerson, 1987). Johnson and Pearson, (in Dyanda et al, 2006), see the causes of poor performance as attributable to poor literacy skills. In education the complaint is often that pupils do not do well in school across the curriculum because they have inadequate reading and writing skills. As such, some provinces in South Africa have developed their own literacy strategies in line with the requirements of the NCS (2005) and the new CAPS (2011) documents (Gauteng Primary Literacy and Mathematics Strategy, 2010-2014; the Limpopo Literacy Strategy, 2009; and the Eastern Cape Literacy documents, 2009).

As illustrated in the historical outline above, literacy has been an issue in South African primary education for quite some time. In the first chapter I made reference to a bimodal distribution of achievement (Fleisch, 2008; Taylor and von Finkel, 2016; van der Berg, 2015) in which the first system consists of former white and Indian schools and a small but growing independent sector. This has functional schools that produce the majority of university entrants and graduates in Math and Science (Fleisch, 2008). The system now enrolls children of elite black and white middle classes and makes sure the children in its charge acquire literacy and mathematics

competences that are comparable to those of middle-class children anywhere in the world (Fleisch, 2008; van der Berg, 2015).

The second category of the school system, where the two cases in this study belong, enrolls the vast majority of working class and poor children. Because they bring their health, family and community difficulties (Gustafsson, 2005) with them into the classroom, "the second primary school system struggles to ameliorate young people's deficits in institutions that are themselves less than adequate" (Fleisch, 2008:2). Children in this system learn for seven years in primary school but acquire a much more restricted set of knowledge and skills than children in the first system. They read but mostly at very rudimentary functional level; they write but not with fluency and confidence.

A number of recent studies have reflected the now well-known fact that literacy levels are very low in the primary school system in South Africa at large. Studies show a consistent statistical pattern in primary school under-achievement – a pattern consistent with the bimodal distribution. The Western Cape Education Department (WCED) has carried out annual studies on learner achievement since 2001 and these have pointed to underachievement in literacy and numeracy. The Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) (2011; 2014), Southern and East African Consortium for Monitoring Education Quality (SACMEQ) (2007), Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) (2006 and 2011), and the Annual National Assessment (2014) results have all confirmed literacy challenges with achievement averages ranging between 23% and 34% (Draper and Spaull, 2015) in the primary school system in the country.

Draper and Spaull (2015) established that 41% of grade 5 learners were underperforming (non-readers) in oral reading comprehension in the National Education and Evaluation Development Unit studies of 2013 throughout South Africa, while Fleisch (2016) confirmed similar findings in Mathematics, with disaggregation showing that the pass rate was lowest (3.7%) in township and rural schools. Subsequent studies in 2005 showed similar trends. The TIMSS studies of 2011 and 2014 ranked South Africa at the bottom of all the countries involved in the study in terms of numeracy, literacy and life skills. This outcome was confirmed by the World Economic Forum (2013) studies that also ranked the country nearly last (146) among the 148 countries involved with an achievement rate of about 10%.

The PIRLS (2006; 2011) studies confirmed what had already been learnt from earlier studies. Although learners were allowed to take the test in any of the 11 official languages, South Africa was still ranked last in terms of literacy achievement among learners at grade 3 level (measured on learners in grade 4). This was corroborated by evidence from the Department of Education Systemic Evaluations in grade 3 and 6 as well as cross national studies of literacy and mathematics showing that only 28% of all grade 6 learners tested were reading at levels required by the NCS (2005). In the latest PIRLS (2011) study almost two thirds of the country's children were marked as "not achieved" on the standardized test. The scores for systemic evaluations for all years prior to 2011 show that the majority of grades 3 and 6 learners, particularly black children, are consistently not reading and writing at levels required by the NCS (2005). The situation seems to get worse by grade 6 with six out of every ten learners not reaching the minimum curriculum standard in language within Gauteng province.

The nation's grade 3 literacy and numeracy performance standards have been ranked among the worst in the world (Moloi and Strauss, 2005). In a study of learners' achievement in science and

math education among 62 countries, the World Economic Forum (2013) rated South Africa as the worst (position 62 out of 62) performing country. Such ratings reflect significant macro challenges in curriculum implementation.

Local findings also signal that literacy is a problem in the primary school, and particularly in the foundation phase. These findings reflect that problems in foundation phase literacy teaching and learning may have far reaching effects for learners. PIRLS (2006; 2011), TIMSS (2011, 2014), HSRC (2006), ANAs and other findings serve as indicators of the challenges that exist at the specific grade levels evaluated**.** The following table summarizes the situation by province. The literacy situations of the two schools in this study needs to be contextualized in relation to the overall situation in the country and the province over the years.

Table 3.2 Grade 3 literacy by province, 2001, 2007 and 2011

Province	2001	2007	2011
Eastern Cape	24%	35	39
Free State	27%	43	37
Gauteng	33%	38	35
KwaZulu Natal	35%	38	39
Limpopo	27%	29	30
Mpumalanga	28%	32	27
North West	29%	35	30
Northern Cape	23%	34	28
Western cape	33%	48	42

South Africa	30%	36	35

Source: Department of Basic Education, Trends in education: Macro Indicators Report 2009 p79; Report on the Annual National Assessment of 2011, p20.

The two schools in this study, Nellus and Kolo, scored 48% and 12% respectively in Literacy in the Annual National Assessments for 2010. I use the 2010 data as this was the closest data available to the time of my study. These statistics inform of the levels of literacy in the two schools and they reflect the bimodal distribution (Fleisch, 2008) I referred to earlier in this section. In the light of this reality, the next section looks at the language policies of the two schools at grades 3 and 4 in terms of how language capacitates learners to deal with content in curriculum materials such as textbooks, readers, and words teachers use in their everyday teaching vis-à-vis the realities on the ground.

3.5 Language Policies, Literacy and Learning

Language and literacy are inextricably linked. Wolf (in Department of Basic Education, 2010:29) observes that "language is not everything in education, but without language everything is nothing". It has been argued in some quarters that language alone should constitute the core of any curriculum (Graves, van den Broek and Taylor, 1998; Barrentine, 1999; Dyanda and Nyawaranda 2004).

The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (RSA, 1996a) and the South African Schools Act (SASA) (RSA, 1996b) inform language education in the country and recognise eleven (11) official languages. From these legal documents the former Department of Education adopted the Language in Education Policy (LiEP) (DoE, 1997). This policy is further clarified through section 8 of the same policy which is called the Language of Learning and Teaching (LOLT)

policy. The last two macro systemic policy documents have a bearing on this study in as far as learners have, or do not have, language with which to access the curriculum.

The Department of Basic Education (2009:42; 2010:29) among a host of other studies (Reeves, et.al 2008; Broom, 2004; Desai, 2001; Fleisch, 2008; Reddy, et.al 2006) contends that the interpretation of the language in education policy has contributed to the problems bedeviling education in South Africa. Quite clearly, policies on language and additive bilingualism are not interpreted in the same way across schools. It would appear that there has been discontinuity between what curriculum statements (particularly *C2005*) say and what transpires on the ground.

The two schools in this study approached language policy issues differently. Nellus is a straight-for-English school. This means that English is regarded as the home language of all the learners in the school, with Afrikaans treated as the first additional language. In reality not one of the students spoke English at home and also, a minority (estimated as 1% by the deputy principal) of the students spoke Afrikaans at home. This means the children came to school and were confronted by a situation where the languages they already spoke were rendered useless, neither relevant nor even worth being spoken in the premises. What this meant for the children's identity, cultural heritage and self-concept is a matter for reflection and introspection on decision makers at this school. This also means that in effect students were confronted by two new languages from the time they entered school. This situation, however, was to change under the CAPS period since every school was mandated to teach at least one indigenous language and English as a first additional language.

The Minister of Basic Education (DBE, 2009:50), in a statement notes that; "The teaching of English as a First Additional Language must be given priority, both in the provision of

appropriate textbooks and reading material, and in clear specification for teaching mother tongue and English as the language of teaching and learning in parallel. English must be taught from Grade 1." This ministerial statement in effect meant another significant curriculum transition.

Fortunately, even the teachers recognized the folly of the language assumptions and frequently spoke in other languages to explain subject matter, a clear disjuncture between policy and practice. The choices of the two languages of this school confirmed findings by earlier studies (Heugh, 2000) that parents and school governing bodies were often insufficiently informed of the factors involved in the choice, the significance of such choices and their implications for language in education.

Kolo used two home languages in the foundation phase namely, isiZulu and Sepedi. On registration parents were given the option to register their child in either of the two classes. All instruction was given in these languages throughout the foundation phase up to grade 3. In September, English was introduced in preparation for grade 4. This effectively meant that learners in this school were taught through either Sepedi or isiZulu and only exposed to English for three months prior to grade 4. There was no first additional language teaching prior to September. This is a significant difference between policy and practice.

The two schools in this study appeared to have interpreted C2005 differently. Kolo read it as encouraging them to apply mother tongue instruction in the foundation phase, followed by English from grade 4 while the Nellus school governing board opted for two languages (English and Afrikaans) that were *neutral* (DVT A012 on 02,12,2011) to nearly all learners as a result of the multilingual nature of the surrounding community. Interestingly, Nellus timetabled Afrikaans for only 10 minutes per day during the course of the foundation phase, but teachers responded by

not teaching it at all as they found the school policy irregular and out of tune with the realities of their classrooms. "The truth is that no one teaches it (Afrikaans) in the foundation phase to this day and the learners will confirm this", observed one grade 3 teacher. The learners also confirmed they had not learnt the school's first additional language during the course of the foundation phase. Effectively this meant Nellus had one language in the foundation phase, namely English.

Kolo did not introduce English as a **core** subject to learners in the foundation phase until January 2012 when *CAPS* was rolled out, only switching to it as the LOLT from grade 4 upwards. This approach must be viewed in the light of the importance of English as the language of wider communication and the home language as a vehicle for culture and identity. In reality this meant that the students had barely three months from September to early December of grade 3 to learn English before switching to it as the medium of instruction in grade 4. This finding flies in the face of research that shows a person requires up to seven years (Baker, 2006) to reach native speaker competence in a new language. Other studies (Cummins, 1981; Collier and Thomas, 1989) specify slightly shorter periods such as five to six years. Ball (2010:2) observes that six to eight years of education in a language are necessary to develop the level of literacy and verbal proficiency required for academic achievement. This policy interpretation would take its toll on learners as I discuss in the chapter on literacy development.

The approaches to the LOLT adopted by the two schools need to be understood relative to the linguistic distribution of learners in the classes in this study. It is necessary to note at this point that the switch to English as the medium of instruction at grade 4 level actually lowers the transition point from grade 5, the stage advocated by the Department of Education and Training (DET) prior to 1994. The switch to a second language as the LOLT effectively means that the

school uses transitional bilingualism[7] which is at odds with the LiEP's additive bilingualism. As such, the literacy practices reflected by the choices of the LOLT in these two schools appeared to ignore the sociocultural conditions of the learners. When the social and cultural conditions of learners are ignored in the literacy choices schools and their teachers make, literacy learning is rendered difficult.

3.6 Conclusion

This chapter has set the context in which this study was conducted. While clearly structuring it along both the process-person-context-time model of the ecological systems theory and the literacy as social practice theory of the sociocultural approach to literacy, the study clearly captures an interesting transitional time in that it was conducted when curriculum transition was taking place within the macro transition (historical movement) while at the same time targeting the foundation to intermediate phase transition. Also interesting is the setting of the two cases in this study and how the meso and micro factors played out in the schools. Such was the context of this study. The next chapter examines the methodological aspects of the study.

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[7] A form of additive bilingualism in which the mother tongue is substituted by another language.

Chapter 4: Methodology

4.1 Introduction

This study traces the transitional literacy experiences of learners and teachers as learners move from grade 3 to grade 4 using a case study design in the interpretive inquiry paradigm. The study explores whether foundation phase reading and writing adequately prepares learners for the academic and curricular demands of the intermediate phase. It does this by interrogating the strategies used by learners and teachers to negotiate the transition from grade 3 to grade 4. In the process, the study also considers the influence of language in this transition.

Studying transitional literacy with special attention to the teaching and learning of reading and writing directly enters the realm of human behaviour and, thus, calls for interpretive inquiry techniques. This chapter opens with a description of the research design, that is, the qualitative collective case study. The chapter then moves on to provide a description of how data presented in this study was gathered. In the process I also provide details of the schools (research sites), classes studied and the participants whose invaluable contributions inform the data here presented. The chapter then concludes with a description of the data collection techniques and the methods used to analyse the data.

4.2 The Research Design: The Collective Case Study

This study was designed in line with case study methodology in the qualitative paradigm. Guba and Lincoln (1994:2) define qualitative research as "multimethod in its focus, involving an interpretive, naturalistic approach to its subject matter. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them." Consistent with this definition is that by Erickson

(2014) who defines interpretive (qualitative) research as the study of the immediate and local meanings of social actions for the actors involved in them. The term 'interpretive' emphasizes the fact that qualitative research focuses on local meanings rather than the general or universal, participants rather than subjects, populations and not samples. As such, this study incorporated whole populations of grade 3s before concentrating on a smaller group of learners.

My belief here is that human actions are strongly influenced by the settings in which they occur. Wilson (1977:249) states that "those who work within this tradition [qualitative] assert that the social scientist cannot understand human behaviour without understanding the framework within which the subjects (*participants*) interpret their thoughts, feelings and actions." Borgdan and Birklen (2006) advance this position by asserting that to divorce an act, word or gesture from its context is to lose sight of significance. The objective of inquiry is to develop an idiographic body of knowledge that is best encapsulated in a series of working assumptions that describe the individual cases (Firestone, 2010). Hence, my ultimate goal as a qualitative researcher was to know and understand the transitional literacy reality as the teachers and learners in these schools saw and interpreted it, and to demonstrate how their views shaped the actions that they took within that reality. Denzin (in Huberman and Miles, 2002:364) captures this point when he asserts that, "In a certain sense interpretive researchers hope to understand their subjects better than the subjects understand themselves, to see effects and power where subjects see only emotion and personal meaning."

Yin (in Huberman and Miles, 2002:9) defines a case study as "a research strategy which focuses on understanding the dynamics present within single settings." In this study the setting is the school since whole classes are involved in the study. However, case studies can involve either single or multiple cases, and numerous levels of analysis. These are usually collective or

comparative (Leedy and Ormrod, 2010). Two schools in this study were studied collectively in order to understand trends, continuities, convergences and shared interpretations of the realities within which they operate. Where gaps and dissimilarities emerged these are described in the light of the literacy, academic and curricular implications they had on the overall culture of the school system.

I chose the case study design because of its suitability to the issues I intended to study. Issues of transition can best be understood within specific settings. Similarly, the effect of language, and hence literacy, may not be best understood outside of other site-specific and contextual issues impinging on them. As such, the research questions guided the choice of the research design. The research questions relate to social aspects in terms of how reading and writing are taught and learned in the foundation phase in preparation for the transition to the intermediate phase. Rather than intervening from a distance or use quantitative experimental and scientific methods, I found it imperative to be present for long periods in the setting, observe, view documents, events and artefacts within their contexts and understand issues in their natural settings, which are the two primary schools, Nellus and Kolo.

Case studies are flexible and typically combine data collection methods such as archives, interviews, questionnaires and observations (Yin, 2003). The evidence used in case studies may be qualitative (wordy) or quantitative (numerical) or both. My study employs some numeric evidence but predominantly draws on descriptive evidence. Case studies can be used to accomplish various aims: to provide description, test existing theory and build knowledge from it (Maxwell, 2013). Theory building seems to require rich description, the richness that comes with qualitative designs. We uncover all kinds of relationships in our quantitative data but it is only through the use of soft data that we are able to explain 'hard data' (Gheradi and Turner, 1987).

This study could potentially bring about transformation and improvement of systems in terms of how transition and literacy are managed in the two schools. As an empirical inquiry, the case study is ideal for investigating the contemporary phenomenon of transitional literacies in the real life contexts of the two sites.

By their definition case studies are in-depth, focus on one instance of a larger class of things and investigate phenomena in real life contexts (Knobel and Lankshear, 1999). In line with this assertion, I designed my study to be intensive in terms of both the time span and the amount and detail in the data collected. It is focused on a bounded phenomenon, namely the social group of learners in grade 3 at the two schools in year 2011 as studied through to grade 4 in 2012. It is also contextualised in contemporary, real life events as opposed to establishing experimental settings with control groups, baseline assessments and so forth.

During data collection I remained aware of the limitations of case studies. Critics of case studies argue that it is not possible to offer grounds for reliability and generalise the findings (Tellis, 1997; Corcoran, Walker and Wals, 2004). However, they give insight into what could be happening in similar settings. Findings in this study are not meant to be generalised. In my study the quest was to understand how transitional literacy issues manifest themselves in the specified schools. As such there was no attempt to generalize the findings since the magnitude of the study and the aims thereof were not meant for this.

I used thick description (Creswell, 2008:483) to present the multiple constructions of reality I came across in this study. As a qualitative researcher I became immersed in the situation, present and past, and the phenomenon I was studying. As such, I became directly involved in every

aspect of this study in terms of data collection, interpretation, analysis and discussion. Such is one hallmark of a case study.

The argument on objectivity becomes an issue in instances where immersion is involved. I was informed by Strauss and Corbin (in Patton, 2002:488) who observed that researchers, both qualitative and quantitative, have learned that objectivity is not possible but what is important is to recognise that subjectivity and intrusion should be minimised. As such, I ensured minimum intrusion as much as I humanly could. I ensured minimum involvement in both teaching, learning and interaction during classes.

Previous studies on literacy (Barton, 1994; Street, 2001; Heath, 1983; Prinsloo and Breier, 1996) have shown that while the contradiction made above may appear detrimental to research, this can be a significant strength in literacy as a social and cultural phenomenon both in schools and communities and as means of understanding "what's going on" (Street, 2001:2) before proffering suggestions for improvement. As such, I tried to be as objective as is humanly possible and recorded as much data as I could. Such objectivity should be inherent in the data itself rather than in the judgement I may hereto ascribe.

A key feature of the qualitative paradigm I exploited was the need to immerse oneself in the case under study. I stayed in the two schools for 9 months (October 2011 to June 2012), sitting in classes and teaching (on request) and learning with my participants every school day in order to fully understand, familiarise, and experience the phenomena in the same ways as they did. Such ethnographic techniques ensured that I gathered data in a friendly and unhurried manner that ensured sound relations between the participants and the researcher beyond the data collection process.

4.3 Two Research Sites

The two research sites, Kolo and Nellus primary schools, were identified through the help of the Tshwane South District Education Office that identified schools that could best represent the situation in Gauteng in relation to my topic. Two research sites were chosen to allow for collective cross-case search for patterns. When a pattern from one data type is corroborated by evidence from another, the finding is stronger. When evidence conflicts, deeper probing of why and how becomes necessary. The two research sites were also chosen to represent the nature of township schools in Gauteng province in terms of how they tackle teaching and learning. Generally, township schools in the province approached schooling either through a vernacular language or they went straight for English. The two contrasting methodologies led me to Nellus and Kolo primary schools in Mamelodi township, Tshwane South district of Pretoria. Tshwane South district was also accessible and convenient to me as a researcher.

4.3.1 Nellus Primary School

Located in a high density township, about 25km south of the Pretoria CBD, Nellus is a straight-for-English medium of instruction school. The neighbourhood comprises of Reconstruction and Development Programme[8] (RDP) houses and thus consists of people on the low income rung of the social ladder. There are high levels of unemployment in the area (DVT A023 on 22.05.2012) and the majority of the inhabitants depend on government grants. The school, in conjunction with a non-governmental organisation, runs a feeding scheme in which pupils receive breakfast, lunch and fruit. The inhabitants of this township speak different languages and are of different

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[8] A broad based government programme meant to redress the imbalances of the past and improve the standard of living and quality of life of all South Africans through provision of free housing, clinics, hospitals etc. The programme targets the poor and disadvantaged sections of society.

origins. As such the school is a convergence point for learners and people from different places in and outside South Africa who send their children for primary education there.

Established in 1999, the school boasts a staff compliment of 45 teachers, about 1500 pupils and about 10 non-teaching staff. The non-teaching staff is further boosted by 5 extra school support programme (ESSP) supervisors who assist learners with homework after school. Like all other schools in this township, Nellus primary school is a non-fee paying, quintile[9] 1 school. This means that the school depends entirely on the allocation it receives from central government for its stationery, developmental programmes and other needs. There is neither a library nor a school hall and the play grounds are stretches of open earth. However, the play or assembly area for infants (grade R), situated between the administration and the infants blocks, is well paved and flowers are well maintained. The same applies to the parking area for staff cars and the visitors' parking area. A lawn graces the school entrance area on one side as one approaches the administration block.

There is an acute shortage of classrooms at Nellus. As a result the school had three temporary structures it used as classrooms. These still do not make up for the shortage, so class sizes at grade 3 and 4 are high (the total of grade 3 pupils was 195 in 2011 but these were divided into 3 classes) with classes as large as 69, hardly leaving space for the teachers to move around in the 7m x 7m square classroom. As the deputy principal explained the school had been promised additional structures but this was still to happen at the time of this study. The straight-for-English policy was a strong pull factor and made the school a popular choice for parents in the area who appeared to see this as better equipping their children for the demands of future education. "Even

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[9] The first quintile represents the lowest fifth (bottom 20%) of the population of schools in South Africa.

with such crowding our school remains the most popular in this area", remarked the deputy principal of Nellus.

4.3.2 Kolo Primary School

Kolo is also a quintile 1 school established in year 2003 and has a staff complement of 34 teachers and 9 non-teaching staff. It also benefits from the extra school support programme and has 8 supervisors that also support children with their homework. About 1200 pupils attend school here. Being only one and half kilometres from Nellus and in the same township, Kolo also runs a 100% feeding scheme for the pupils on the same diet as described above. Being a newer school, the arrangement of buildings at Kolo is slightly different from that at Nellus. The administration block and classrooms are built just a few metres from the entrance to the school but boasts of larger school grounds and play areas for children. There appeared to be adequate classrooms to accommodate all the learners comfortably in the school. As a result class sizes at grades 3 and 4 averaged 39 pupils. In 2011 the school had 119 grade 3 pupils divided into 3 classes.

Like her other neighbouring township schools, Kolo had no library and hence, no librarian but had received about 1000 textbooks from a donor. These books stayed locked in a storeroom. Classrooms had trolleys they used to store their textbooks in the form of classroom based libraries. The grounds were also not maintained but the children's play area between classrooms was paved and lined with brickwork presumably to minimise dust.

At Kolo the media of instruction prior to grade 4 were Sepedi and IsiZulu. English was the first additional language. Kolo was ideal for this study because of the vernacular approach to foundation phase teaching and learning, and I am sufficiently conversant in these two languages

to enable me to conduct this study. IsiZulu and Sepedi are the two major local languages spoken in this area. It was imperative that a school that is non-English-medium-of-instruction prior to grade 4 be selected in line with the general approaches to education in township schools. The LiEP (DoE, 1997) requires that learners be taught in their home languages prior to grade 3 and later transition to another (English) medium of instruction. For research convenience, it was necessary to identify a school with such a policy and located in the proximity of Nellus Primary School, as a second research site. This school was Kolo.

4.4 The Participants

There were three grade 3 classes in each of the schools. I visited all the 3 classes for three consecutive weeks, observing lessons and interacting with their teachers before choosing two classes per school for comprehensive observation during grade 3. Two classes gave the researcher a broad base to understand literacy issues and experience a wide range of language related matters in the school as well as identify specific learners who could be followed into grade 4. Teacher responsiveness/affection, learning atmosphere and guidance from the deputy principals who had intimate knowledge of the teachers and who would likely be comfortable with a researcher in their class constituted the criteria for selecting the two classes for intensive study in grade 3. Learners in grade 3 in 2011 who moved to grade 4 in 2012 and all their teachers, heads of department and vice principals constituted the participants in this study. Each of these groups of participants is described below:

Learners: Grade 3 and 4 learners are aged between 9-11 years. All grade 3 classes were initially included in the study before the researcher settled for two classes to concentrate on. Classes with alert, clever and welcoming learners as well as welcoming teachers became pull factors in the

choice of the two classes in each school. The inclusion of all classes in the initial stages of data collection was in line with qualitative designs that study populations rather than samples. Two classes per school were deemed representative and manageable for one researcher. As the classes moved to grade 4, only one class was identified and all selected learners were placed there. The one grade 4 class was studied in each school to narrow the scope for intensive study. The identified learners were seen to be representative of the group on key indicators as I describe later. The strategy here was to begin broadly with the whole population before gradually narrowing in depth with a smaller number of participants and fewer classes.

At the end of 2011 I requested both schools to place the identified learners in one class for ease of monitoring and closer data collection for the second dataset. So, six learners at Nellus were all placed in the same grade 4B class while the four learners at Kolo were all placed in a grade 4A class. The identified learners were representative of the two grade 3 classes that had been observed and also ensured both gender balance and ability (see table 4.3).

The pupils selected for intensive study in grade 4 were observed while learning in class, and individually as well as in groups. They were also interviewed several times both formally and non-formally in simplified English or in a vernacular language of their choice. This study was non-discriminatory and hence, neither race, age, gender, language, ethnicity nor any other such discriminatory criteria found reflection in the selection process. Of interest were learners who exhibited high linguistic ability, showed unique perceptions, were representative of the different sexes and academic ability as well as open to engage the researcher. The focus was on the patterns and trends in both learner and teacher experiences of the transitional process.

Teachers: Five (four observed and interviewed while one was only interviewed) Grade 3 and nine grade 4 teachers participated in this study. All grade 4 teachers were observed while teaching their respective subjects and later interviewed while one of the five grade 3 teachers was only interviewed.

Heads of department: The four HODs for the foundation and intermediate phases were interviewed in each school. These were very experienced and dedicated educators who had invaluable knowledge in their areas. Their views and opinions helped in shading important light to this study, given that even the curriculum was in a state of transition in South Africa at that time.

Deputy Principals: There are two deputy principals in each school. They were included among the participants because of their general knowledge of the system and their roles in the day to day operations of teachers and learners across the phases. The level of enthusiasm shown by two of the deputy principals prior to commencement of data collection was also a pull factor in the decision to involve them. At the proposal stage I made a decision to exclude principals of the two schools. Principals are often busy with policy issues, parents, infrastructural and other extraneous issues that tend to distance them from the day-to-day academic affairs of the school. While their inclusion could have contributed valuable data on curricular and transitional issues, I decided that this strand could be adequately compensated by the inclusion of their deputies.

4.4.1 Selection of Participants

The selection of respondents was purposive rather than randomised. I included all grade 3 teachers and all grade 4 teachers in order to clearly understand the issues in the two case schools and to include everyone connected to the phenomena under the study. All other teachers in the

schools whose classes fell outside the scope of this study, and hence were not related to the literacy issues at the transitional point in question, were excluded. I also included all HODs and deputy principals since they were directly involved in the affairs of the learners under study. I only needed those learners, teachers and administrators whose daily responsibilities impinged with the concerns of this study. Below is a summary of teacher participants in this study. All participants were given psedonyms.

Table 4.1 Summary of teacher participants

Teacher	School and Class/Position(Code)	Teaching experience in years	Highest qualification	LOLT	Subject(s) Taught
Ms Thula	K.3B (DVT A010)	24 years	BA (Hons.), UP	Sepedi	Literacy, Life skills, Numeracy
Ms Morena	K.3A (DVT A009)	19 years	BA (Hons), UP	isiZulu	Literacy, Life skills, Numeracy
Ms Muchena	K.3C (DVTA006)	7 years	BA, Unisa	Sepedi	Literacy, Life skills, Numeracy
Ms Phethile	N.3B (DVT A013)	8 years	Dip.Ed.,Transvaal	English	Literacy, Life skills, Numeracy
Ms Bati	N.3C (DVT A014)	3 years	Dip. Ed, TCE	English	Literacy, Life skills, Numeracy
Ms Mujaji	K. Deputy Principal (DVT A011)	33 years	BA, Unisa	English	Non-teaching
Ms Sele	K.4. HOD intersen (DVT A023)	24 years	BA (Hons), Unisa	English	Maths
Ms Mojah	K.4 (DVT A024)	2 years	B.Ed (Hons.), UP	English	English
Mr Mago	K.4 (DVT A025)	12 years	Dip. Ed, TCE	English	Life Orientation
Ms Moyo	K.4 (DVT A026)	21 years	Dip.Ed,Mujaji,CE	English	Social Sciience
Ms Sizwe	K.4 (DVT A027)	10 years	Dip. Ed, Unisa	English	Arts and Craft
Ms Tiro	K.4 (DVT A031)	20 years	Dip.Ed, Burgerspoort	English	Natural Science
Ms Mzii	K.4 (DVT A032)	29 years	Dip.Ed, KwaNdebele	isiZulu	isiZulu
Ms Vista	N. Deputy Principal (DVT A012)	25 years	BA (Hons.), Unisa	English	Non-teaching
Ms Fire	N.4 (DVT A028)	27 years	Dip.Ed, TCE	English	Technology.
Ms Ndebele	N.4 (DVT A029)	36 years	Dip.Ed, BotshabeloCollege	English	Life Orientation
Ms Tau	N.4 (DVT A030)	32 years	Dip.Ed, Unisa	English	Economic Manag.Scie.

| Ms Lekai | N.4 HOD intersen, (DVT A033) | 15 years | BA, Unisa | English | English |
| Mr Mushe | N. Deputy Principal (DVT A034) | 18 years | M. Tech, TUT | English | Non-teaching |

The pseudonyms identify teachers interviewed. Their titles are indicative of the gender of the teachers but may not reflect their statuses. Letters K and N reflect the teacher's school while DVT A is the interview code for the specific teacher.

The following teachers and their classes were observed during the period October to December 2011 before being formally interviewed at the end of the period during the course of grade 3.

Table 4.2 Grade 3 Teachers observed for the first data set

Name	School &Class	Interview date	Subjects Observed
Ms Thula	Kolo 3B	07.12.2011	Life skills, Literacy and Numeracy
Ms Morena	Kolo 3A	06.12.2011	Life skills, Literacy and Numeracy
Ms Phethiwe	Nellus 3B	08.12.2011	Life skills, Literacy and Numeracy
Ms Bati	Nellus 3C	08.12.2011	Life skills, Literacy and Numeracy

As I have already alluded to in this chapter, I used evidence from lesson observations and children's exercise books to select learners for the second data set and identified them on the basis of high linguistic ability, unique perceptions, gender balance, academic ability and sociability. The researcher was also guided by the teacher's knowledge of the children on the selection. As illustrated in table 3.3 below, four top learners, four average and two below average learners were selected, comprising five boys and five girls and seven home languages. I also

ensured that the cohort for the second data set included pupils from all the four classes I had worked with during the year 2011. Table 3.3 shows the pupils selected for closer study during gathering of the second data set in 2012.

Table 4.3 Learners selected for closer observation and interview in grade 4

Name (sex)	School	Age	Home language	Home Background	Ability group
Kamogelo (M)	Kolo	10	Tsonga	Stays with both parents	Below average
Noxolo (F)	Kolo	10	Xhosa	Stays with both parents	Average learner
Thulani (M)	Kolo	10	Sepedi	Stays with both parents	Top learner
Rutendo (M)	Kolo	9	isiZulu	Stays with both parents	Top learner
Thuli (F)	Nellus	10	isiZulu	Stays with both parents	Top learner
Kate (F)	Nellus	10	isiZulu	Stays with her mother	Average learner
Amukelani (M)	Nellus	10	Northern Sotho	Stays with his mother	Top learner
Thabo (M)	Nellus	10	Sepedi	Stays with both parents	Average learner
Tshireletso (F)	Nellus	9	Sepedi	Stays with both parents	Average learner
Boikantso (F)	Nellus	10	isiNdebele	Stays with both parents	Below average

Below are the profiles of the learners selected in the second data set as obtained through in-depth interviews.

4.4.1.1 Thuli

Born on October 16, 2003 in a family of three children, Thuli is the second born and stays with her parents in a neighbourhood nearly three kilometres from school. As a result she uses transport to come to school. Born of a policeman and a social worker, Thuli was fluent in Ndebele and Sesotho/Sepedi. She recalled her mother as the first person who taught her the art of reading and writing while she maintained teachers only built on the ground her mother and crèche had already laid. "I read many books but the one I enjoyed most was *Lazy Mandla*," she said. A generally quiet young girl who had been groomed to respect and behave well at all times, Thuli was able to focus and concentrate on her work without requiring supervision. She said she made sure she edited her work before submitting it for marking and did the same with reading in which "I listen to what I read so that I can understand." Her literacy habits helped her perform above everyone in her class.

4.4.1.2 Kate

Kate was born on March 9, 2002 and stayed with her mother and step father in a family of three children. To her, she did not have a father since her father had never cared to visit or know her. Her step father was a security guard while her mother was a nanny in the eastern suburbs. She recalled her brother as the first person to meaningfully teach her how to read and write. However, she reiterated, much of the work was done by her teachers after she started schooling. She enjoyed reading magazines and story books but maintained she would read "anything" she came across. Her teacher reported that Kate's family background was having a negative impact on her school work as she often came to school with incomplete homework as well as her penchant to rush out for food shared out freely during lunch and break time at Nellus. Kate spoke isiZulu at home but could understand Sesotho as well as English.

4.4.1.3 Amukelani

Born on July 18, 2002 Amukelani was the smallest boy in the grade 4B class of 2012 at Nellus. He lived with his mother, grandfather, grandmother and two young sisters. His father lived in Thembisa, a township in Johannesburg where he had reportedly started another family. In his reading history Amukelani was quick to mention teachers as major players in shaping his reading and writing abilities. "Although my mother played a part, I think my teachers did more," he observed. He mentioned "stories of the past people" as his preference for reading. He appeared a very quiet, reserved and likeable boy whose neatness also permeated his work although his letter shaping and handwriting, like most others, was not as good. Other than English, Amukelani only spoke Northern Sesotho but could understand other languages cognate to it.

4.4.1.4 Boikantso

Boikantso had ambition to become a social worker one day. She was born on the 26th January 2002 in a family of four girls and one boy. She lived with both her parents in the vicinity of the school. Being the second last born in the family she indicated that she had learnt to do things for herself. Her father worked in the president's office and her mother was a magistrate. In both health and dressing, Boikantso distinguished herself as one of those few learners from a family that could afford the basics of life. Her parents bought her story books and she also benefited from some old books that were used by her elder siblings. Boikantso boasted of many friends most of whom were in the same class with her at Nellus. She could speak isiZulu and understand siSwati. She was in the process of learning Sesotho.

4.4.1.5 Kamogelo

Born to a policeman and a retail chain store worker on the 16th of December 2002, Kamogelo was the third born in a family of four children. Privileged to come from a family with a steady and stable income, Kamogelo was one of the few children who did not eat the donor food given out to pupils at break and lunch time. He brought his own food every day. He sought reasons and understanding at most times before engaging into an activity. Kamogelo recalled his grade 1 teacher as the person who had contributed much to his writing and reading abilities. To him, the whole grade 4A class at Kolo were his friends. Kamogelo spoke isiZulu and Sesotho as well.

4.4.1.6 Tshireletso

Tshireletso was born on the 7th January 2003 and stayed with both his parents and commuted to school every day. Commuting to Nellus gave him problems at times because when there was no organised transport he had to find public transport home. His father worked in the retail industry while his mother ran her own kitchen business. In his writing history Tshireletso mentioned teachers as the contributors to his writing ability but reiterated that his mother had greater say in his ability to read. He enjoyed reading story books and any other readers that he could find. He understood other languages cognate to Sepedi.

4.4.1.7 Thabo

Born on the 7th September 2002, Thabo stayed with his father and mother in a family of three children, two boys and one girl. His father was a dealer who bought and sold wares of all kinds and his mother looked after children at home. Thabo had a slender body and showed signs of malnutrition. In his reading history Thabo mentioned his mother and crèche but did not mention his teachers at school. He argued that only his reading ability could relate to the school but still he felt his mother had played an equally key role. To Thabo most of his learning took place at

home. He liked reading story books and mentioned *Wanjiro and the Giant* and *Hare and the Barrel of Honey* as his favourite stories. Thabo disliked stick hockey and clowns. "They make fools of themselves," he remarked. I found Thabo to be a very clever, lovely young boy who had something to say or contribute at all times. Thabo stayed about ten kilometres from school and used transport to come to school every day. He said he had gotten used to this and was no longer affected by it. He understood other languages cognate to Sepedi.

4.4.1.8 Thulani

Born on the 5th February 2003, Thulani stayed with his mother in a family of three children, two boys and a girl. His father worked in an office but he did not know his job title. His mother was a domestic worker in one of the eastern suburbs of Pretoria. Although Thulani looked malnourished, one thing outstanding about him was his fluent reading ability and writing speed. He was very fluent in reading both isiZulu and English but would hardly pronounce the words properly which meant he hardly understood the things he would be reading, particularly in English. In his writing history Thulani indicated that he had learnt to read and write at home and at crèche. He reiterated that the crèche gave him most of the inspiration to read and write. Ironically Thulani disliked noise but was one of the noisiest learners in the class. His ambition was to become a pastor when he grew up. He spoke isiZulu and isiNdebele.

4.4.1.9 Rutendo

Rutendo was one of the top performers in the grade 4A class at Kolo. Born on the 5th February 2003, Rutendo stayed with both her parents but reported that her father lived in Nelspruit but she did not know his job. Like her best friend Thulani, her mother was a domestic worker in the eastern suburbs of Pretoria. Rutendo was adamant her writing and reading skills had been taught

to her by her parents at home. She enjoyed reading story books and newspapers, magazines and all other sorts of readable materials. Rutendo had ambition to become a businesswoman when she finished school. She loved to play and to eat her food. At one time the lunch bell rang while I was talking to her and she abruptly sped off to the queue for free food, leaving me speechless. Her sociable character guaranteed her friends around her at all times. Her energy allowed her very little time outside of play and, as such, she was right to describe herself as noisy. Anytime there was a list of noise makers compiled by the class monitor I was sure Rutendo's name was in the list. She understood other languages cognate to isiZulu.

4.4.1.10 Noxolo

Born on the 29th October 2002 to a construction worker father and a woman who worked in a public bar (Adult World), Noxolo lived with both her parents close to the school. She maintained that her mother taught her the basics of reading and writing at home before the crèche took over from there. In her submission Noxolo indicated that she loved reading story books, fashion magazines and newspapers. She was one of the few well behaved learners in the grade 4A class at Kolo. She stayed in her position and always did her work in a calm, composed and calculated manner. She showed signs of malnutrition and lacked confidence at times, frisking her fingers and looking down while she spoke. Noxolo had ambition to become a lawyer when she grew up. She understood other languages cognate to isiXhosa.

4.5 Data collection

By its nature the very process of data collection is selective. The researcher who is collecting the data is the person who sees and thus selects what to attend to, for how long, by what means and so on. This means he/she chooses what to see and what not to see, what to note down and what

not to. And having noted proceeds to analyse data in methods he/she also determines and the depth of description he/she ascribes to such selection, including total omissions. Such a filtering process renders the whole data collection, analysis and interpretation substantially subjective and this study was no exception.

My data consists of large volumes of field notes compiled as teaching and learning occurred, 36 transcripts of interviews with children, teachers, heads of department and deputy principals of the two schools, documents such as children's exercise books, end-of-term reports, textbooks, charts and so forth. Below is an account of the instruments used and how triangulation enhanced validity of the study's findings:

4.5.1 Observation/Field notes.

 I observed four grade 3 teachers (two per school) and all grade 4 teachers that taught in the grades 4B and 4A of Nellus and Kolo respectively from October 2011 to June 2012 up to a total of 112 lessons (also see page 225), with each lesson either being 30 minutes or 1 hour long for double lessons.

Observation was an integral method of data collection in this study. Field or observation notes, "an on-going stream of consciousness commentary" (Huberman and Miles, 2002:15) about what was happening in the research, involving both observation and analysis – often and preferably separated from one another – was used to collect data. Observation enables the researcher to understand events, practices and actions as they happen. It gives experiential strength to case studies and allows the researcher to problematize practice. Here I employed thick description techniques (Creswell, 2009) to record events and experiences of both learners and teachers as they interacted in the teaching-learning situation.

My notes had two sections on each page. In the first column I recorded what happened, combining narrative and descriptive techniques, and in the second column I wrote my commentary, basing on theory and thoughts occurring to me before they got lost. This way, field notes brought overlapping data collection and analysis, thus, taking advantage of one integral characteristic of case studies, which is flexible data collection. Observer's comments are important at all times, so I recorded my own thoughts and feelings (Borgdan and Biklen, 1992).

As indicated above, the first observation lesson series covered the grade 3 lessons taught in the fourth school term of 2011 from mid-October to December. These observation data enabled me to identify those learners that I could work with into grade 4. By the end of the term I and the respective class teachers had identified those learners. The second observation series covered work done in grade 4 in year 2012 with special focus on those ten learners identified for careful, thorough study.

I observed the last school term's work with particular interest in Literacy subject lessons for grade 3 classes in order to carefully monitor and observe participants' behaviours, reactions and any other informative actions I deemed important for this study. I looked for reading and writing behaviours, literacy practices, the nature of the literacy events the learners went through, how they fared in exercises given, the time they took to accomplish tasks, their competence levels in doing those tasks, and so on.

As an investigator I could not be objectively separated from the reality I was investigating. I had to become part of it and became actively involved in it, constructing and making sense of it (Filstead, in Magagula, 1996; Smith, 1984). I took nine months or three school terms in the classes under study observing learners in their actual learning environments. To this extent I

participated in the teaching and learning lives of the participants in a participant observer role. Such semi-direct involvement of the researcher was a key element of this study. In qualitative designs there is greater flexibility in both the methods and the research process. Typically, a qualitative researcher uses the emergent design and makes decisions about the data collection strategies during the study. As a result of observation of this principle I carried a tentative observation schedule into this study. I had to alter this quite significantly as different lessons, literacy events and observations unfolded. See appendix A.

Such observations of lessons gave insights on literacy practices and competences of learners as they engaged the curriculum at the two levels under study. Observation also provided practical data on what actually took place at the chalk face and thus provided leads on the research question on what teachers do to enhance transitioning of learners. Language issues were interrogated in practice and learners' experiences with the transition were seen, heard and felt. Issues of reading and writing competence as well as learning area specific register were covered through observation. Thus, the observation process needed careful and detailed description so that it laid a basis upon which interviews and other field data were founded.

4.5.2 Interviews.

 Silverman, (2004) maintains that interviewing is undoubtedly the most widely used technique for conducting systematic social inquiry. Several semi-structured interviews were used in an on-going (interpretive) form to seek understanding of the participants' progress across the duration of the study. Semi-structured interviews offer flexibility (allow for follow ups) and focus and can be held any time, even after work (Tellis, 1997; Silverman, 2004).

Interviews with the learners took the form of individual as well as group interviews. Some pupils appeared to find it difficult to engage in one-to-one interviews but found it easier to engage in group situations where they felt comfortable. Literature on this aspect (Silverman, 2004; Frith, 2000 and Jarret, 1993) shows that group interviews are more reliable than individual interviews. The groups comprised of between two and four pupils at any given time. These provided opportunity for discussion and opinion to each group member during the course of the interviews. My experience during this study was that one-on-one interviews are more effective for the kind of data sought in this study. Group interviews tended to carry an aura of excitement among some learners. This compromised precise data.

Also covered by the interview were teachers in the two transitional grades 3 and 4, heads of department (if not already teaching these grades) and deputy principals of the foundation and intermediate phases. Interviews were done throughout the data collection period, with the first set of interviews (first data set) being held with grade 3 teachers, pupils and HOD's in December 2011. This meant that interviews followed after lesson observation and were meant to bring about convergence on aspects of observation data. The second set of interviews was held between April and June 2012 (second data set) and involved learners, grade 4 teachers, intermediate phase HOD's and intermediate-senior (intersen) phase deputy principals. So, in each instance interviews brought convergence between data as observed, data as reflected in documents and artefacts. Also, interviews tended to provide the ascriptions and meanings both teachers and learners put to their practices. Audio recording was used in all cases with the permission of the interviewees and later transcribed verbatim.

Learners' subjective experiences constitute one of the bases upon which teachers adjust and modify their teaching practices. Covered through the interview were issues to do with teacher

expectations on literacy competence of outgoing grade 3 or in-coming grade 4 pupils, their knowledge of curriculum content and expectations of the teachers in adjacent grades, views on learner abilities, language development and policies, the grade 4 slump and any other issues as they emerged from responses given by interviewees. The first set of interviews with pupils (December 2011, DVT A002 to A005) centred around their expectations for the coming grade, their readiness and their reading and writing abilities and so on while in the second data set interviews (April 2012, DVT A015 to A022) shifted to the transitional and literacy experiences in grade 4 as well as the academic and cognitive demands of grade 4 as compared to grade 3.

4.5.3 Document Analysis:

I analysed children's exercise books, textbooks, workbooks, readers, school reports, timetables and any other teaching and learning documents used to prepare learners for the curriculum content requirements at each grade level in this study in order to fully understand the matters covered by the research questions of this study.

Document analysis was done in the classroom, outside learning times by the researcher. I avoided the risk of carrying textbooks and other documents home in order to build confidence among teachers. I however, requested 30 old, completed (finished) exercise books at the end of the year, photocopied 50 old and current school reports for selected pupils as well as collected other documents that would not affect learning and teaching such as copies of tasks, past papers, assessments, registers, progression schedules and so on.

Permission was sought and granted in every instance to either copy or collect documents before these could be carried home for closer scrutiny. Other documents examined ranged from record books, evaluation books for teachers and learners' written work as well as text books to see if

these were in line with the learners' literacy abilities at each level as well as being in harmony with the expectations of the policy statements for the subjects. Whether or not content as contained in textbooks, work books and teaching notes allowed for the smooth academic transition from grade 3 to grade 4 was important in corroborating patterns between observation and interview data. Learner performance marks as contained in test records were analysed to ascertain the extent of the fourth grade slump. Document analysis was, thus, a central method and instrumental for this study. Through document analysis I understood the magnitude to which the fourth grade slump manifests itself in the cases under study.

4.6 Interpretation and Analysis of Data

The cross-case analysis of data collected through observation was corroborated with data from document analyses, interviews and class tests to enhance reliability. Each set of data was analysed in relation to the themes, patterns and issues the data addressed. The themes are physical transition (size, location, seating arrangements, classroom re-organisation and so on), psychological transition (language switch, confusion, confidence levels, anxiety, frustration and so forth), academic transition (literacy practices, change of discourse, teacher-learner transition, anxiety, uncertainty, confusion), curriculum transition (change of subjects, teaching structure, timetabling, resources, and so on) and systemic transition (from NCS to CAPS, phase transition and logistical changes). In the literacy strand the themes were learner performance, pedagogy, literacy events and practices, skills acquisition, and resource utilisation.

In essence convergence (triangulation) brought about by observation, interviews, document analyses and child achievement data provided patterns and trends in the findings in the first place – by seeing or hearing multiple instances of it from different sources, using different methods

and by squaring the findings with others it needed to be squared with. In the end there was correspondence between evidence as seen, evidence as experienced and evidence as told.

Data collected during this study was in the form of handwritten field notes, transcribed tape recordings of interviews, photographs and other events in the field setting, as well as numerical test marks and school books. In most cases the focus was on words as the basic form in which the data are found. Tape recordings of interviews were transcribed into verbatim written text (interview notes) before they were analysed using discourse analysis techniques such as conversational analysis, narrative analysis and stylistics so as understand the communicative intentions (Gee, 2005) and conversational implicatures (Slembrouck, 2003). The ultimate goal was to attain the speaker's meaning(s). These were coded as means of identification and categorisation to give patterns, hunches, trends and recurring themes. These were then compared and reported.

Field notes and interview notes were converted into write-ups transcribed from dictation. Field notes contained brief abbreviations that were legible and intelligible to the researcher. These were made clearer in the write-ups in order to add back some of the missing content. The notes were then coded in order to make them relate to other notes by use of side notes, numbering, arrows or underlining. Such coding allowed easier conclusion drawing, noting recurring patterns and themes for reporting (Huberman and Miles, 2002).

During the analysis I searched through data for regularities, departures and patterns as well as for topics, high frequency words and phrases to represent themes and patterns as a way of making coding categories. Such coding enabled me to sort data in relation to each research question. I found it necessary to form word or phrase clusters during analysis of field notes, textbooks and

other documents. Such clusters are presented in the form of tables. Pupils' literacy competences required to be presented in tabular reports that categorize pupils' strengths and weaknesses before they were narratively summarized.

After the analysis all data was sorted in relation to the research questions they answered before these were allocated to specific chapters of the thesis for reporting. Each research question was addressed although some data related to more than one question. For example, learners and teachers' strategies for dealing with transition tended to correlate in ways that left the researcher with decisions to report these together in some cases.

4.7 Limitations, Challenges and Constraints

Like any research, this study was not immune to challenges and constraints. One limitation was that I would spend half the day in one class before moving to the other to complete the day. This meant that I would be in Nellus from 7.30am to 11.00am before moving about one and half kilometres to Kolo to complete the day from 11.30am to 2.00pm when the school day ended. The period between 11.00am and 11.30am coincided with break time for both schools. This routine would then be changed accordingly in order to begin the day where I would have ended the previous day. Clearly, one cannot be in two places at once. I could have missed some critical events by spending half the day rather than the full day in one class. I compensated for this weakness by the extended period I took to collect data for this study in the two schools.

I kept my participation in teaching and marking at a minimum (I only got involved upon being consulted) to allow for objective and maximum observation while at the same time guarding against the temptation of turning to participative, action oriented methods. I wanted to remain within the limits of case study methodology.

I interviewed the participants in English which was not the home language of all the participants. The English was simplified in line with the linguistic levels of the interviewees. In cases where interviewees were not conversant with English I translated the questions into the home languages of the participants. This could have had the effect of losing meaning through translation or providing clues to respondents that come with explaining. The cases of translation were predominantly at Kolo where the learners' grasp of English was still at low level. I concede that I could have probably obtained more data had the learner interviews been conducted in their home languages.

I used both individual and group interviews with learners but did not do the same with teachers. My view was that some children find comfort under the cover of others and would be more open to contribute when among their peers. Since there was no request for, or reference to, group interviews from teachers I felt group interviews would have limited adult participants in expressing their opinions in certain cases.

As is often the limitation of group interviews, it was not possible to obtain different responses from each of the learners on every question asked while in some cases some learners tended to speak more than others. Some learners tended to speak on behalf of everybody in the group and this made me apply my subjective experience in judging whether the opinions and views expressed were really representative of the popular feeling. All data from group interviews were analysed together with individual data, with each piece of data referenced to its original participant.

Although all grade three and four teachers had signed consent to be interviewed (see appendix D) during the initial stages of data collection, when the time for such interviews came some

teachers exhibited behaviour that was read as refusing to be interviewed. They cancelled appointments several times and in some cases gave excuses each time they were asked for time. Their views were not obtained and hence could have contributed valuable information for this study. I had two such cases. It is my view that the absence of the two teachers' views did not compromise the validity of the data in this study since the majority of teachers participated.

The other challenge was the balance between interview data and observation data. I had to deal with the temptation to assume that whatever I had gathered through observation would become unnecessary to confirm through interviews. Similarly, large volumes of observation data were obtained and the choice on what to include and exclude was not such a simple one. In the end I had to exercise discretion on data that best answered the research questions.

The final limiting factor could also be the Hawthorne effect (Coombs and Smith, 2003). This is a situation where participant behaviour changes on becoming aware that they are being observed or interviewed. This situation was particularly evident in lesson observation data for the first three weeks of the first school term of 2012 (second dataset). During this period teachers taught what I felt were lessons meant to impress me as a researcher. I made a conscious decision to disregard lessons observed during this period and concentrated on learner observations. As time went on grade 4 teachers got used to my presence in their lessons and started teaching their usual way. A particular case was when a teacher described the education system in South Africa as "mixed up" in an informal discussion but when I asked her for a formal interview she refused to use the same phrase to describe the same education system. Such situations could have occurred during classroom observation and interviews with the effect of limiting data. Similarly, the interview situation was unfamiliar to most of the respondents, with four teachers openly

indicating it was their first time participating in an academic research interview. Such lack of experience could have limited data obtained from those teachers.

I think that interviews I had with learners were the first such interviews in their lives. This could have compromised the quality of their responses to questions. Similarly, some questions on pedagogy appeared quite challenging to teachers, necessitating explanation on my part. Also, despite the assurance of confidentiality it is possible that teachers could have felt apprehensive about the use of data, and hence provided data they felt I wanted to hear rather than the truth of their practice. While it was possible to mitigate such effect with teachers observed, the same cannot be said with teachers I only interviewed.

I have presented these limitations to demonstrate the level of honesty involved in the data collection process and thus recognize that participants' responses may be conditioned by the circumstances and context of the data gathering process itself. While the challenges relate to the internal validity of the data collection process, they do not invalidate the findings.

4.8 Ethical Issues

I undertook three preliminary visits to the research sites to seek verbal consent of the administrations of the two schools. On receiving the verbal consent I then drafted the necessary consent letters to the Gauteng Education Department and Tshwane South district education offices (See appendices). Having secured the authority of the two administrative offices I proceeded to seek written consent from the two schools, the individual teachers, the parents of all children in the classes identified and the children themselves before data collection could commence. Consent from teachers varied in accordance with the nature of input required of them. From grade three teachers in whose classes I sat to observe lessons I clearly sought three

different kinds of consent, namely consent to be observed, consent to be interviewed and consent to be tape recorded (see appendix D and G). Grade 4 teachers whose lessons I observed did the same while those I only interviewed and the HOD's and deputy principals only provided consent to be interviewed and tape recorded.

Through the pupils, I sent consent forms to parents to seek consent to sit in class and observe lessons as well as observe their children learn. From the pupils I sought consent to observe them while learning, to see their materials and books and to interview and tape record the discussions. All these forms of consent were obtained ahead of the data collection exercise (see appendix E). These documents were all presented to and cleared by the Wits University Human Research Ethics Committee before authority to collect data could be granted.

I provided all the necessary information to ensure that consent received in each case was informed consent. I assured all participants in this study of the confidentiality of their responses and that the work produced would only be used for academic purposes such as the PhD thesis, conference papers, journal articles and books.

I considered the discomfort to teachers and learners that came with being observed and studied. As such my focus had to be clearly explained, especially to the teachers whose classes I worked with to avoid them altering their normal practice. The presence of another person in the classroom could cause stress and discomfort to the inhabitants of the class. So, I made sure that I fused into the everyday activities of the classes and became part of them.

I used codes such as letters of the alphabet, labels, and colours and also used pseudonyms in my notes and report of the data to provide for anonymity of respondents and participants. I also made my notes, recordings, report and other data available to them if they wished to see them.

While I experienced significant ethical challenges in the process of conducting this study, such as the decision about what to do when a teacher struggles with content in a lesson I observed, I conducted myself at all times and to the best of my knowledge in a manner that balanced my researcher responsibilities while at the same time upholding ethical practices and standards of integrity with regard to the data and people that were involved in this study.

I should also indicate at this point that the process to convince some parents to consent to this study posed quite some challenge at the outset. In the end two parents objected to sign consent forms authorising the researcher to either observe or interview their children. The two concerned children were accordingly left out of the research processes.

Chapter 5: Curriculum Change and Transition

5.1 Introduction

Transition is at the heart of this study and one way of understanding the phenomenon is to work with it at the macro, meso and the micro levels. Transition can take various forms such as physical transition, psychological transition, academic transition, curriculum transition and systemic transition. Each of these modes of transition affects teachers and learners.

In order to understand transition among the learners and teachers, and particularly at the time of this study, one aspect of transition that needs to be foregrounded is curriculum change. The ecological systems theory which informs this study emphasizes the critical value of time in any form of change (Bronfenbrenner and Morris, 1998). It is important to unpack the curriculum shift from National Curriculum Statements (NCS) and Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements (CAPS) at the time of the study as it affects the school setting. The change in curriculum content as a result of the movement from NCS to CAPS in 2012, thus, creates an opportune moment upon which to establish, lay and compare the macro transitional and literacy realities in the two schools at this particularly interesting moment in the history of education.

The first section of this chapter looks at curriculum transition with particular focus on the foundation-intermediate phase interface and how a change in curriculum policy affected teaching and learning in the two case schools. The section deals mainly with macro level curriculum policy change and how it affected teachers and learners (psychological transition) at a time when learners were also undergoing the foundation-to-intermediate phase transition.

The next section compares the literacy content for grades 3 and 4 as documented in the NCS with that of CAPS as a way of mapping the government's expectations for learners. The

documents assume optimum to ideal conditions in schools, dedicated teachers who are conversant with their subject matter and learners' with certain assumed literacy knowledge and under normal circumstances, as well as having adequate resources for literacy learning.

5.2 Curriculum Policy Shift

Curriculum changes occur everywhere in the world, including South Africa. However, when such changes occur, the effect such changes may have on teachers and learners vary from place to place due to the different socio-economic, political, historical and material conditions of both teachers and learners. The latest curriculum change was the shift from the revised NCS to CAPS which were implemented from 2012 onwards. In the end any midstream change in the curriculum inevitably impacts on children's literacy and other forms of development. As such, learners in this study were affected by a curriculum policy shift that occurred midstream after they completed the foundation phase under the NCS in 2011, and then began the intermediate phase under the new CAPS curriculum in grade 4 in line with the policy changes that came into effect in 2012.

The transition from foundation to intermediate phase on its own is often a challenge for both learners and teachers (Chall, 2003; Prinsloo, 2008; Sanacore and Palumbo, 2009). To then add a second transition in the form of a curriculum policy change at this point in education potentially aggravates the problem of transition. This curriculum shift saw both learners and teachers stretched. Cleave, Jowett and Bate (1982:195) observe that "When a seedling is transplanted from one place to another, the transplantation may either be a stimulus or a shock. The careful gardener seeks to minimize shock so that the plant is re-established as easily as possible." The move from NCS to CAPS and the transition to grade 4 represents the transplantation.

There is a close relationship between curriculum change and transition. I therefore begin by looking at how the literacy subject area curriculum policies/statements for both NCS and CAPS construct literacy and how such constructions have created convergences/continuities, changes, additions and potential difference (tension) between the two policy statements. Findings in this research show a link between curriculum transition and how this impacted on both teachers and learners. The chapter moves to consider teacher psychological transition as the policies changed in the two case schools in terms of their attitudes and practices as well as their interpretations of the transition. The chapter proceeds to view transition in terms of other meso-factors that affect the schools at large. These are interpreted in terms of the manifest and covert behaviours of both teachers and their learners. The chapter then closes with teachers' conceptualisations of literacy across the phases as a possible centre of curriculum dislocation.

When looking at issues of transition what emerges from the data is that, at macro level, curriculum change is a major factor in what happens to learners in this study. While there were other factors, curriculum transition comes to the fore. There is often a gap between policy and practice, and the experience of teachers having to implement the new policy speaks to transition in practice.

5.3 Curriculum Transition: from NCS to CAPS

In the context chapter I alluded to the challenges facing South African education and pointed to a number of studies showing the poor performance of learners. There is significant contestation as to why this is the case (Taylor, 2012). Critics have implicated the curriculum (Jansen, 1999b and 2005; Harley and Parker, 1999; Muller, 2004; Taylor, 2008; Spaull, 2013), teacher quality (SACMEQ III, 2007; Fleisch, 2008), resource availability (Harley and Parker, 1999; Taylor and

Yu, 2009; Taylor, 2011), lack of congruence between policies (Taylor, 2012; Reeves, 2008; DBE, 2010) among others as the primary challenges facing education.

The reasons for the move from the NCS to CAPS are specified in the Department of Basic Education's curriculum review report (DBE, 2009) as an attempt to move away from outcomes based education (OBE). CAPS attempt to focus on skills and knowledge while moving away from attitudes, dispositions and competences which were the central concerns of OBE. The DBE (2009:16) specifies that the aim behind curriculum reform was to enhance "the development of a high level of knowledge and skills for all."

CAPS simplified the curriculum statements in terms of the language used, the explicit stating of content to be taught, the assessment requirements and specified the actual subjects in the curriculum (to clarify and specify what teachers should teach). As such CAPS was meant to bring about alignment between national and provincial language policies and reduce content gaps between transition points. Also pertinent was the component of assessment that was notably missing in previous curriculum statements. It was/is necessary for policy statements to provide clear, simple and subject specific assessment guidelines for each subject (DBE, 2009). As such the policy change implied the need for a mind shift on the part of teachers who would implement it, which becomes the concern of this study.

The policy shift also meant that time allocation for specific subjects would change. Bronfenbrenner (2005) sees time as a critical factor in education and curriculum implementation, so its effects are wide and decisive. The way both the curriculum and its implementers deal with time (to include use, misuse and allocation) show the importance of particular subjects and the

amount of value invested in them. The table below compares time distribution across subjects between NCS and CAPS.

Table 5.1: Time Allocation compared.

NCS		*CAPS*	
Subject	**Time in Hours/Week**	**Subject**	**Time in Hours/Week**
Literacy	10	Home Language	6
		First Additional lge.	4(5)
Numeracy	9	Mathematics	7
Life Skills	6	Life Skills	6

Table 5.1 shows the time re-apportionment for different subjects in the foundation phase that resulted from the shift from the NCS to CAPS. It shows that time for literacy learning increased by an optional hour per week. If a school teaches the minimum 4 hours of FAL the time may stay the same. However, time is clearly apportioned between home and first additional language under CAPS, unlike in the NCS where the 10 hours were misinterpreted to mean teaching of home languages in some schools at the expense of the FAL. Data in this study shows that the lack of explicit specification of time allocation for each language before 2012 saw the first additional language being either taught orally for 10 minutes per day or teachers rather ignored it out right. As such English and Afrikaans were neglected at Kolo and Nellus respectively.

The consequence of not having specific allocations was that many schools did not teach FAL but only home language. This was in breach of the language policy (Constitution, 1997). It also created problems for learners who had to make a language transition in grade 4. Changes to CAPS equally affected the intermediate and senior phases.

The NCS policy statements (DBE, 2002a, b, c) for grade 3 specify that learners should approach literacy in their home language and that "once learners know how to read and write in their home language, they can use their literacy skills to read and write in their new language" (DBE, 2002a:10). On beginning grade 4 learners from Kolo who had learnt literacy through isiZulu and Sepedi had to deal with the curriculum taught through English. In part this meant that English and the vernacular languages had switched roles. English had, technically, become the home language since it had become the language of instruction. IsiZulu and Sepedi had assumed second language roles. Unfortunately, English was the subject learners had only started learning in September of year 2011 in grade 3. Children at Nellus had no FAL teaching at all in the foundation phase. The table below shows the subjects and time allocation per week in the intermediate to senior phase.

Table 5.2: Time distribution for intermediate phase subjects

NCS		Time in h/week	CAPS	
Subject		**Time in h/week**	**Time in h/week**	**Subject**
i.	Home Language	3.5	6	Home Language
ii.	First Additional lge	3.5	5	First Additional lge.
iii.	Mathematics	5	6	Mathematics
iv.	Natural Science	3	3.5	Science and Technology
v.	Social Science	3	3	Social Sciences
vi.	Life Orientation	2	4	Life Skills
vii.	Arts and Culture	2		
viii.	Economic and Management Sciences	2		
ix.	Technology	2		

Table 5.2 shows that literacy teaching time was increased from seven hours to eleven hours per week[10]. More time was allocated for languages and mathematics. Table 5.3 below compares the

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[10] The time came from the reduced number of subjects that were reduced from nine to six as shown in the table.

recommended distribution of time per day for teaching literacy skills, with reading and writing skills being isolated, between NCS and CAPS across grades 3 and 4.

Table 5.3 Reading and Writing Skills Time Allocation per day for Grade 3 and 4

Learning Outcome	Grade	NCS HL	NCS FAL	CAPS HL	CAPS FAL
Reading and reviewing	3	1hr	10min	1hr	50min
Writing	3	1hr	-	15min	15min
Reading and reviewing	4	30min	30min	1hr	1hr
Writing and presenting	4	20min	20min	15min	15min

Table 5.3 shows that learners were supposed to spend an hour every day learning to read in their home language and only 10 minutes to learn reading in the first additional language in grade 3 under the NCS, with another hour set aside for writing. This discrepancy set the stage for potential language and literacy problems.

By implication it meant that learners at Kolo left grade 3 without FAL reading skills because these were presumed to be founded on home language reading skills. Only after mastering reading in home language would reading in FAL be taught, hence the 10 minutes for FAL under NCS was spent on oral work. For Kolo it meant the learners left the foundation phase without adequate English FAL to bridge them into reading within the curriculum in grade 4 when they switched to English as the medium of instruction. Likewise Nellus learners were disadvantaged by a school home language (English) taught to them at FAL level throughout the foundation phase. The learners in the two schools' reading levels were equally but variably compromised. When CAPS came into effect Grade 4 teachers implemented the new curriculum without due regard for learners' compromised situations in both schools. Teachers argued this was not a

problem of their making (DVT A027 on 07.06.2011). But the fact remained that learners had inadequate reading and writing competence in both languages.

Also notable from the table is the fact that no time was set aside for written work in the FAL in grade 3. This meant that learners in both schools had hardly any writing skills in the FAL when they started grade 4. Under the NCS grade 3 learners would spend 1 hour on written work in the language subjects. On moving to grade 4, and now in the CAPS curriculum, learners were expected to spend more time (1hr) for reading in both home language and first additional language but only 15 minutes was set aside for writing in each language subject per day. It appears that the CAPS curriculum gives more importance to teaching reading. The disparity in time allocated for writing as reflected in the curriculum also implies that on reaching grade 4, learners were expected to write even faster, in cursive, and in a relatively new non-cognate language, than the NCS had demanded from them in grade 3.

All the writing these learners had done throughout the foundation phase was through either isiZulu or Sepedi as the school home languages. Suddenly all work was written in English in grade 4. The cultural discontinuity (Hornberger, 2004) and dissimilarity adversely affected learners in their written work as I illustrate in chapter 8. On the other hand, learners at Nellus who approached schooling through English as the home language, had in actual fact learnt English at FAL level in the foundation phase since teachers made the decision of adopting this approach in the light of all the learners being non-English language speakers. While Nellus learners were in a better position with a level of continuity, their literacy skills level was compromised by the use of a FAL level literacy instruction without the support of full home language instruction.

5.3.1 NCS Home and First Additional Languages in Grade 3

I analyzed the structure and content specification of the grade 3 literacy area subjects (English home language at Nellus and FAL, isiZulu and Sepedi at Kolo), paying special attention to English FAL, to establish from a curriculum point of view what the learners were expected to know and/or the skills the learners should have acquired on completion of the foundation phase. Curriculum analysis also helps to flag what the Department of Basic Education expects from the nations' learners at this level of schooling. The ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 2005) informs us that upon entering a new setting, the person's development is enhanced to the extent that valid information, advice, and experience relevant to one setting are made available, on a continuing basis, to the other. So, the idea here was to see if there was a fit between the two curricula which would allow for a smooth transition without impeding academic and literacy development of learners.

English FAL was isolated for critical review because of the convergence that occurs in grade 4 when most subjects are taught through it. Also, Nellus claimed to be teaching English as the home language when in reality they followed the English FAL curriculum because none of their learners spoke English as a home language.

By grade 3 learners were expected to read a wide range of fiction and non-fiction books at an appropriate level, have a wide vocabulary and keep and use a dictionary as well as write in their new language. Grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation would be taught in context (DBE, 2002a:11). The NCS policy statement required learners to be familiar with poems, songs, riddles, dialogues, simple descriptions, simple instructions, calendars and many other types of text in their new language by the time they completed grade 3.

The grade 3 home language subject statements for both NCS and CAPS specify that the learner should read simple story books, poems, rhymes and their own writing independently, with increasing speed and fluency and using correct pronunciation and stress (DBE, 2011a,e,f). The same learner should be able to retell a story and describe how the story made him/her feel. Learners are expected to be able to describe a process (e.g. how to make tea) as well as answer simple literal questions. Home language texts should be read with ease but still be challenging for the reader either at the decoding or comprehension level. As such, the reader is expected to recognise and quickly decode 90-95% of the words, resulting in them reading fluently and with appropriate expression (DBE, 2011a). This is taught to learners through three teaching strategies namely independent, shared and group guided reading. At grade 3 level the subject statements specifically state that learners will not need to finger-point while reading.

Tables 5.4 and 5.5 below compare grade 3 and 4 NCS and CAPS literacy content. The classes in this study followed NCS in grade 3 and then crossed over to CAPS in January 2012 onwards when curriculum policy changed. The tables also illustrate the content differences and similarities between the two curricula.

In the CAPS document reading is constructed in a tighter, clearer and more detailed way for the teacher to follow. Since reading in grade 4 was designed for learners who could apply the language and literacy skills to texts of different kinds, this was bound to cause challenges for learners at Kolo who did not have the English with which to access the curriculum content. Evidence from document analysis and observation clearly indicated they had not adequately mastered reading even in their home languages. The dissimilarities (Hornberger, 2004:156) between English and the African languages meant that there was limited room for transfer and continuity of reading skills. This is compounded by the fact that the languages are non-cognate

and, thus, linguistically have very little in common. While grade 4 learners at Nellus could be expected to read and write in the new language (English) to some degree owing to the extended exposure since grade 1, the same could not be expected of Kolo learners who encountered English both as a learning subject and as the language of access to the curriculum. Given the differences between the languages and literacy skills between English and African languages, Kolo learners faced greater difficulties. Thus, curriculum change and transition to the intermediate phase presented a shock (Cleave, Jowett and Bate, 1982) rather than a stimulus to the learners.

Table 5.4 NCS and CAPS literacy content compared

NCS Grade 3	CAPS Grade 3
Aims: Competences, attitudes and dispositions	**Aim:** Knowledge and skills
Approach to Literacy: Approach literacy through home languages (in these cases English, isiZulu and Sepedi) before transferring skills to the target language (FAL in these cases English and Afrikaans).	**Approach to Literacy:** Approach home language and first additional languages concurrently. The two should support each other in literacy development of learners.
<u>Literacy Content</u> **Reading and Reviewing**: *Read and view for information and enjoyment, and respond critically to the aesthetic, cultural and emotional values of texts* • To use visual clues to make meaning i.e. understand and compare pictures, photographs, images etc. • Make meaning of written text by reading with the teacher: read title, answer literal questions and express feelings, retell stories etc • Recognise and make meanings of letters and words: high frequency and sight words, phonics, context clues and predictions to make sense of text • Read with increasing speed and fluency • Read aloud, using correct punctuation and appropriate stress • Use self-correcting strategies such as reading, pausing and practising words • Develop phonic awareness: sound spelling relationships, vowel and consonant digraphs, double and treble consonant blends, onsets and rimes • Reading on own for information and enjoyment • Demonstrate a reading vocabulary of between 700 to 1500 common words **Writing:** *write different kinds of factual and imaginative texts for a wide range of purposes.* • Write individual words • Keep a personal dictionary • Spell common words • Give headings to word lists • Write sentences using a frame • Write own sentences without a frame	<u>Literacy Content</u> **Reading and Phonics:** • Identify letter sound and letter name relationships • Recognise consonant digraphs e.g. sh-, -sh, wh-, -th, etc • Recognise vowel digraphs e.g. '00','ee', 'ea', 'ai' etc • Distinguish between different sounds aurally • Recognise rhyming words • Build 3,4 and 5 letter words using consonant and vowel digraphs • Spells words correctly using phonic knowledge • Sorts letters and words into alphabetical order • Write at least three short sentences dictated by the teacher • Uses graphical clues to talk about a graphical text • Reads different poems around a topic and discusses both • Reads with increasing fluency and expression • Shows understanding of punctuation when reading **Writing and language use:** • Forms all lower and uppercase letters in joined script or cursive writing • Uses handwriting tools effectively • Spaces words effectively in lines • Writes words to form a sentences using capital letters, full stops, question marks, commas, exclamation marks, apostrophe, semi-colon, colon and inverted commas

• Use punctuation (. , ? !) • Sequence and copy sentences to make a paragraph • Make invitations and greeting cards • With support, write a short dialogue • Write a simple recount using as frame. **Thinking and Reasoning:** *to use language to think and reason, as well as to access, process and use information for learning* • Record information in different ways • Use language for thinking and problem solving	• Writes at least one paragraph of 8 sentences such as own news, creative story, description of an incident/experiment • Use present, past and future tense correctly, subject-verb-object agreement correctly, etc. • Uses spelling rules to spell unfamiliar words, etc.
Assessment requirements: Assessment standards for teachers to individually assess from as benchmarks.	<u>**Assessment requirements**</u> Annual National Assessments, Provincial common papers, District common papers, daily and weekly exercises from the textbooks and the teacher, etc.
Teacher Support: NIL	<u>**Teacher Support**</u> Methods and strategies for teaching every learning outcome and sub-skill suggested and teaching materials provided.

Sources: (DBE, 2002a&b, and 2011a, b, e, f).

Table 5.5 NCS and CAPS Literacy in grade 4 compared

NCS: Grade 4	CAPS: Grade 4
<u>**Content**</u> **Reading and viewing:** *Read and view for information and enjoyment, and respond critically to the aesthetic, cultural and emotional values of texts* • Read fiction and non-fiction texts such as poems, stories, myths, brochures, reference books and text books • View and comment on multimedia texts such as cartoons, posters, computers and CD-ROMs • Describe feelings about texts • Show understanding of characters, central idea, setting and plot in fiction texts • Understand vocabulary and choice of words, imagery and effects in poems, stories and multimedia texts (rhythm, rhyme, alliteration, humour, word pictures) • Identify and discuss values in texts (cultural, environmental, moral etc.) • Interpret simple visual texts such as tables, charts, graphs, maps, etc. • Choose texts for own needs **Writing:** *write different kinds of factual and imaginative texts for a wide range of purposes.* • Write different kinds of texts for personal, exploratory, playful, imaginative and creative purposes • Develop and organise ideas through a writing process • Present work through a neat and legible handwriting and proper form such as headings, paragraphs, spacing, indentation, etc. • Apply knowledge of language at various levels **Thinking and reasoning:** *to use language to think and reason, as well as to access, process and use information for learning*	<u>**Content**</u> **Reading and viewing** • Use pre-reading, reading and post-reading strategies to read fiction and non-fiction stories (myths and legends, folk tales, fables), adventure stories, science fiction, biographies, etc. • Plays – titles, illustrations, headings and subheadings, format, newspaper columns etc. • Poetry – literal and figurative meanings, theme, imagery(simile, personification, tone, word choice, emotional response), sound devices (rhyme, rhythm, stanzas, alliteration (assonance and consonance), onomatopoeia. • Close and extended reading of texts (background, setting, characters, story line etc.) • Use pre-reading, reading and post reading strategies to understand text, for critical reading and to demonstrate independent reading. **Writing and Presenting** • Word, sentence and paragraph writing • Creative writing of descriptive, narrative, imaginative and dialogical texts and short plays

• Use language to think and reason e.g. using if, when, then… • Uses language to investigate and explore • Processes information and uses language to think creatively.	• Transactional writing such as notes, posters, short speeches, procedural texts (recipes, instructions, experiments), factual recounts (news reports, procedures etc.), informational texts and visual literacy texts (tables, charts, mind maps, diagrams, drawings, graphs). • Use process writing skills of pre-writing, drafting, revising, editing, proof reading and presenting.

Sources: (DBE, 2002a&b, and 2011a, b, e, f).

Notable in table 5.4 above is the more explicit emphasis given to phonics in the CAPS statement while thinking and reasoning had been eliminated as a learning outcome and integrated across both reading and writing.

Punctuation was extended to incorporate the semi-colon, the colon and the apostrophe at grade 3 while spelling was expanded to include application of spelling rules. It needs to be mentioned here that while writing was generally seen by teachers as handwriting in the foundation phase both NCS and CAPS statements construe it to incorporate generative elements of authoring at grade 3 upwards. The rest of the NCS content remained unchanged and was carried over to CAPS.

Table 5.4 also shows that the assessment component and teacher pedagogical and material support are critical aspects to the CAPS, yet these were absent in the NCS. The table also shows that grade 3 learners (under the NCS) were expected to use visual clues to make meaning of letters and words while reading aloud, using correct pronunciation and appropriate stress, with increasing speed and fluency. As such the learners should have developed sound phonological awareness to deal with vowels, consonants, onsets and rimes and up to three consonant blends.

The NCS (DBE, 2002a) specifies that by the end of the foundation phase the learner should have a reading vocabulary of between 700 and 1500 common words and a listening vocabulary of

between 1500 and 3000 common words. Those learners who study through an additional language were encouraged to aim for 3000 words in their listening vocabulary. At the same time the learners should be able to copy sentences, spell common words, write sentences using a frame, use punctuation as well as write own paragraphs and simple recounts (DBE, 2002a).

Content in the NCS foundation phase literacy learning areas was organized along learning outcomes (language skills) with content to be taught finding reflection through assessment standards[11]. The reflection of content through assessment standards and learning outcomes assumed that the teacher would understand the assessment standards and therefore could draw content of his/her choice from the assessment standards. For example, in reading and viewing an assessment standard such as, 'learner reads with increasing speed and fluency' or in phonemic awareness such as 'recognizes vowel sounds spelled with two letters (vowel digraphs) e.g. ea, ee, ay, ai, ar, er, or, ur, ou, oo, oi' (DBE, 2002a; 33). It is from such examples that teachers were expected to extract content from sources and texts of their choice. Such assessment standards and the corresponding examples were given for each feature of phonemic awareness to enable a range of sub concepts from which a teacher could draw examples.

While the NCS statement empowered the teacher to explore content of a diverse nature and from sources of their choice, the statements did not consider the kind and quality of teachers for which it was intended. It left room for teachers to struggle to decipher the actual content they were meant to teach and how to test learners' level of understanding of such content. The statement assumes that the teacher had a wide pool of content from which to draw out little chunks for individual lessons. This assumption ran contrary to findings of the SACMEQ 111 (2007) studies

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[11] The assessment standards only gave examples of content where clarity was required. Otherwise the actual content a learner was supposed to learn towards the attainment of the said standard was left for the teacher to decide independently.

that found that less than 40% of teachers in the study had adequate language competence to teach at their grade level. Even so, how teachers were meant to teach to attain the stated learning outcomes was scantily stated. As such the statements appeared premised on unrealistic assumptions that could cause divergence between what was intended and what could practically happen in the classroom.

5.3.2 The Grade 3- 4 Shift

On entering grade 4 the child who had been taught through the NCS curriculum was expected to understand stories in terms of how characters and plots are constructed and critique the role of graphics in the construction of meaning in stories. The same learner moves on to read and analyse poetry in terms of poetic devices such as rhyme, alliteration, assonance onomatopoeia and others, while at the same time reading for information. The learner was expected to read fiction and non-fiction books for pleasure and information (DBE, 2002b). By this time the learner would have mastered the art of paragraphing and punctuation using marks such as the dash, colon, semi-colon and the apostrophe. Handwriting was left out as a preoccupation of the foundation phase.

A close analysis of content between grades 3 and 4 shows that the leap in terms of difficulty is quite wide. The kind of punctuation marks, concepts and content specified in the above paragraph demand high literacy skills. When compared to the competences that learners possessed at that time, these concepts, content and skills made grade 4 transition difficult (Hornberger, 2004's discontinuity) and generated the impression that grade was 'hard' (Krashen's concept of i+2). The rift between grade 3 and grade 4 indicates a gap in the level of difficulty between the content and skills level between the two grades. Clearly, the grade 4

curriculum documents assumed learners exited grade 3 with reasonably developed amounts of English and literacy to enable them meet these curriculum requirements. It is my view that this cognitive leap, among other criticisms, was meant to be corrected with the appropriate implementation of CAPS.

The CAPS statements for both home language and first additional language were meant to remedy the loopholes in NCS. In order to lay specific content for the subject, the CAPS statements for grade 4 (DBE, 2011a:14) specify much more clearly the five components of reading at grade 4 level as:

- Phonemic awareness

- Word recognition

- Comprehension

- Vocabulary

- Fluency

As can be seen from tables 5.4 and 5.5, the five components of reading were made explicit in the CAPS documents while implicit in the NCS. CAPS explains them explicitly and shows their application across different teaching units. To build on this continuity, CAPS breaks down the reading and reviewing aspect of language and literacy into three pedagogical steps. These are given as pre-reading, reading and post reading (DBE, 2011a). As a way of offering pedagogical support the statements suggest activities for each stage. Pre-reading is explained as involving the activation of prior knowledge; looking at the source, author, publication date; reading the first and last paragraphs of a section; making predictions and so on. Similarly, reading is explained as involving pausing to check comprehension; comparing content and predictions; using context to

work out meaning; visualizing what is read; adding marks and annotations; reflecting on what is read. Finally, post-reading involves outlining key ideas; drawing conclusions; summarizing; questioning the passage; understanding; evaluation; and extending thinking (DBE, 2011a).

With respect to reading and viewing, attention is clearly drawn to text structure, text features, text types/genres, parts of a book, reading and viewing strategies, visual literacy, prepared loud reading, unprepared loud reading and so forth. This kind of outline is instructive to teachers about the skills and knowledge learners should have as they interact with reading texts and thus serves as the pedagogical support that was lacking in previous NCS policy statements.

An overview of the content to be taught in grade 4 is clearly specified for each skill as well as the corresponding teaching strategies and sub-skills. The work to be covered for each week of every school term is given explicitly. This explicit specification of content means teachers were not left in doubt as to what must be taught and when, what aspects to emphasize and to what degree. It is my view that CAPS took the liberal NCS curriculum back to a prescriptive model that the latter had negated as neo-colonial. The move to CAPS had also brought about alignment between the policy and reading resources at the teacher's disposal in the classroom. The teacher could easily identify the content in textbooks and other sources to use in emphasizing specific skills and knowledge.

English home language and English first additional language policies for grade 4 are structured in more or less the same way save for the fact that home language content approaches are slightly different, the content more challenging and premised on higher order reading and writing skills. As such the prescribed texts and assessment standards assume a more developed conception of language and literacy. Here learners use the language as a tool to express

themselves and to think and learn. At grade 4 the learners who had used different approaches (isiZulu and Sepedi on one hand and straight for English on the other) to attain literacy converged in using English as the language of learning and teaching. This set the stage for literacy learning challenges for both learners.

As with reading, grade 4 writing in the CAPS curriculum assumes that learners have developed handwriting skills throughout the period of the foundation phase and thus move on to prescribe the process writing approach. As shown in succeeding chapters, there was a discrepancy between what the curriculum assumed and reality in the classroom. The process approach was described as follows:

- Pre-writing or planning which involves organizing ideas, making a choice of the type of writing and making mind maps

- Drafting which includes word choice, sentence structure, getting feedback from peers and the teacher and so on

- Revision includes improving content and structure of ideas, refining word choice, and so forth

- Editing or proof-reading involves refinement through correcting spelling and grammar mistakes, punctuation etc

- Publishing or presenting involves presenting neat, legible final version of written work (DBE, 2011a:11-12).

The CAPS policy states that by the end of grade 1 learners should be able to form all the lower and uppercase letters correctly and fluently as well as copy sentences from the board or sentence strips. By grade 3 children should be taught joined script or cursive writing, making the

transition during the first half of grade 3 (BDE, 2011b:19). Handwriting, penmanship and paragraphing and punctuation are part of grade 3 work (see table 5.4). The CAPS documents (DBE, 2011a:109) prescribe that by the end of grade 3 the learner:

- Forms all lower and upper case letters in joined script or cursive writing and begins to join various letters and to form words in the selected joined script or cursive writing.

- Uses handwriting tools effectively, i.e. pencil, eraser, ruler, ballpoint pen etc.

- Spaces words correctly in lines.

- Writes a sentence legibly and correctly in both the print script and the joined script or cursive.

- Writes at least one paragraph of eight sentences such as on own news, creative story, description of an incident/experiment.

- Writes words to form a sentence using capital letters, full stops, question marks, commas, exclamation marks and inverted commas.

- Uses present, past and future tense correctly.

- Uses phonic knowledge and spelling rules to write unfamiliar words (DBE, 2011a).

These are the handwriting skills learners should bring with them to grade 4. While these expectations look reasonable and in line with the literacy expectations any education practitioner could have for learners who would have spent three years under instruction, the reality in dysfunctional schools (Fataar and Patterson, 2002) is that the majority of learners were far from meeting these expectations.

While grade 3 appeared to provide the basics, grade 4 immediately moved to the application or use of such skills and knowledge for learning. The grade 4 policy statements appear to assume

that the learner had acquired sufficient language skills to function meaningfully through the language, in this case English. In grade 3 it was learning to read and write while in grade 4 it became reading and writing to learn. A clear example is seen in punctuation all of whose elements (to include the colon, semi-colon, apostrophe and quotation marks) have been moved to grade 3 but find application in grade 4 work (see table 5.4 above). Learners in this study could hardly identify these punctuation marks, worse still use them in writing. As such there appeared a gap between foundation phase and intermediate phase content and, by implication, pedagogy. While the statements specified the content progression, the reality in classroom implementation and children's exercise books showed a different story.

A further example from the two statements is when a learner who was dealing with phonic sounds in grade 3 under the NCS was now expected to read fiction and nonfiction books at an appropriate reading and language level before being expected to evaluate them and work out crossword puzzles in grade 4 under CAPS. In the light of McDonald and Burroughs (1991) findings that the English of children in standard 3 was below standard 2 level, it is clear that grade 4 work becomes inaccessible to the learners. Regardless of the grade appropriateness of the texts used, such wide gaps meant that learners would struggle to cope with grade 4 content and skills if they were not adequately taught through grade 3.

The issue of content gap is clearer in the first additional languages where learners are expected to contend with areas such as summarizing, poetry (theme, literal and figurative meaning, etc.), drama, advertisements, dialogues, emails, magazine articles and so on. In my view analysis and composition of these literary genres by learners, as the CAPS statement demands, requires a reasonably high level of linguistic competence which learners in these two specific cases were bound to find hard to attain by grade 4, thus perpetuating the disjuncture between what the policy

wants and what it actually has to work with (Gilmour and Soundien, 2009). I make this argument cognizant of the fact that in many schools and where learners have well developed home language literacy skills, these levels are appropriate and attainable.

CAPS appeared to have clarified the NCS grade 4 statements for English by clearly streamlining the content to be taught, in which week of what term it is taught and suggesting strategies for teaching such content, but upheld (if not exacerbated) the gaps in content between the two grades. The content and depth was upheld in a manner that perpetuates the cognitive leap between grade 3 and 4.

The reading and writing, vocabulary and grammar requirements in NCS for grade 4 were basically the same as those in CAPS for the English home language and FAL areas. Learners were still required to use English as the language of learning, and in the two schools in this study, were required to use literacy skills that grade 3 had not equipped them with. There was a wide gap between learners' literacies, in part due to the wide linguistic and structural differences between English on one hand, and isiZulu and Sepedi on the other. As such, poor implementation of the curriculum could impact on literacy development and, therefore, on skills and knowledge levels (Rassool, Edwards and Bloch, 2006).

The CAPS content specified for grade 4 English first additional language required a firm foundation of the subject in grades 1 through to 3. The content was structured for a system that begins with first additional languages from grade 1 and with adequate time allocated for teaching the subject. For learners who were taught through other home languages up to grade 3, the CAPS statement was clearly not designed with their situation in mind. Conceptually demanding areas

such as analyzing poetry, advertisements, book reviews, dialogues, newspaper and magazine reports, and summaries have been upheld from NCS to CAPS.

5.3.3 Curriculum Transition

Learners in the two schools approached grade 4 work with English as the medium of instruction in the curriculum. Those learners at Kolo who had started taking English lessons extensively from September 2011 in grade 3 and those at Nellus who had undergone schooling through English from grade 1 were both faced with an English language based curriculum in grade 4. For Kolo learners this became some form of substitutive bilingualism (Hornberger, 2004) while for Nellus it was successive.

Given that the content fundamentals of NCS were maintained in the shift to CAPS, it meant that there was some level of continuity between the two policy statements. In essence it also implied that the problematic cognitive gap between grade 3 and 4 was maintained with the hope that beginning English from grade 1 in all schools under the CAPS regime would seal that gap. As such, the grade 4 CAPS curriculum appeared to require a reasonably more advanced state of mastery of the grammar and vocabulary of English from its entrants than that required by NCS. In general, grade 4 content assumed that the learner at that level came with reasonably developed spelling, punctuation, grammar, vocabulary, reading fluency and comprehension, hand writing, order/organization, logic and in short, sound or fair amounts of literacy. This study demonstrates that the learners in the two schools under the study did not meet these assumptions and thus grappled to deal with the curriculum in grade 4.

I compared the reading and writing expectations in the grade 3 home languages with those of the first additional language at the same grade in both NCS and CAPS. The expectations in the first

additional language were not significantly different in both reading and writing between home and first additional language subjects across languages, save for the difference in detail and depth of content. In essence this meant that the literacy area statements had been translated across languages. The problem of translation is that the African languages and English are non-cognate and, other than the shared orthography English is opaque while African languages are transparent, leaving too little in common between them. African languages were translated from the English statements. This would naturally compromised literacy in those languages.

The first additional language content assumed that learners transfer literacy skills from the home language to the first additional language, and thus advocated teaching and learning methods that build on home language skills (DBE, 2011f; Hornberger, 2004). The subject statements alluded to the fact that children are often able to decode in their additional language but unable to understand what they read, resulting in 'barking at print'. They (learners) lack sufficient vocabulary and grammar to make sense of what they read. So, teachers were encouraged to build their vocabulary and grammar by exposing them to a variety of language experiences (DBE, 2011b).

In terms of writing, the difference appeared to lie in the level of complexity of the material to be written. Writing, however, becomes very important at additional language level because it forces learners to think about grammar and spelling. As in home language, learners were encouraged to approach reading and writing through independent, shared and group reading and writing (DBE, 2011a). In terms of reading phonemic awareness, phonics, comprehension, automaticity and fluency were again emphasized. Thus, grade 4 appeared to require from its entrants a sound conception of all these skills to enable the learner to use them to access content and concepts

across the curriculum. As such, vocabulary and grammar became central to the acquisition and application of these skills.

While the NCS statements encouraged biliteracy (Hornberger, 2004:166) and hence skills transfer from home language to the new and first additional language at grade 4, CAPS strategies bound teachers to employ pedagogies that assumed the learner had learnt English from grade 1. The reality is that this was not the case for some learners under this study which makes conditions under which teachers and learners in this study had to operate complex.

This section has dealt with issues of curriculum change and demonstrated that the way things were set up in the curriculum was such that a difficult transition to the intermediate phase was inevitable. The grade 4 curriculum demanded from learners skills and knowledge they did not have. The next section focuses on psychological transition with specific focus on teachers.

5.4 Psychological Transition

In environments of flux, teachers are at the centre of curriculum reform (Jansen, 1999b; Fleisch, 2008; Schleicher, 2009) and if any significant change in education is to be realised then it should begin with teachers. If teachers are alienated in the reform process one may end up with a rich policy but without those to implement it. Curriculum 2005 was criticised, among other things, for alienating the teacher (Chisholm et al, 2000; Harley and Parker, 1999) and also for having too high expectations of the teacher (Jansen, 1999b). If curriculum change is badly timed and rushed, it may lead to confusion, frustration, anxiety and, ultimately, poor implementation. This study sought, among other things, to establish teacher strategies to support learners' transition and in order to understand this it was imperative to also understand teacher mind shift in a time of curriculum transition at both the meso and micro levels.

At the school level (meso-level) teachers in this study reported being inadequately prepared for the policy changes that came into the education system during their period of service, particularly *Curriculum 2005* and other successive policy changes. As such, teachers reported a lack of knowledge of the specific changes coming with the introduction of CAPS. In the Nellus deputy principal's response, I could read confusion that had settled in. This was not an isolated response nor was it a far-fetched expression of attitude. The following discussion illustrates this:

> R: In your view, do teachers give learners adequate opportunities to read for themselves in class?

> T: Adequate opportunities may be something else still challenging teachers in the present system. I don't know whether its confusion from constant changes in curriculum policies. This year they will introduce one curriculum and then another the next year. Teachers get confused. It's like they are not comfortable with some changes. It's not easy (DVT A012 on 02.12.2011).

The deputy principal of Nellus intimates that there are other factors, which she calls 'something else' continually challenging teachers. The challenges have clearly been there for a long time, from the past, as these 'still' affect teachers in their work. Her frustration with the 'constant' curriculum 'changes' leads her to doubt herself too as she 'does not know' how to pin down the source of the confusion. Her challenge is clearly a case of the frequency and timing of the changes in the curriculum. If the changes are done 'this year' and then 'another the next year' it is inevitable that teachers would be confused. In her opinion teachers were beginning to doubt if the curriculum was adequately and expertly crafted. They seemed rooted at the introduction stage since 'they' will 'introduce' them one after the other with no mention of moving beyond the introduction stage. As such, confidence in curriculum definers was eroded, probably resulting in distrust, poor implementation and resentment. As a result some teachers remained rooted in the old pre-NCS content, methods and practices.

Asked what informed her curriculum and pedagogical practices, the foundation phase HoD at Kolo had this to say:

> T: It's a difficult one because what I learnt in college is what I was practising. Then came OBE. They have since changed it, then came RNCS, then NCS and now they talk of another one [probably *CAPS*]. We were confused by all those but I am happy with the GPLS [Gauteng Primary Literacy Strategy]. GPLS caters for all the children. And now there is *CAPS*. *CAPS* and GPLS are related. I think GPLS and *CAPS* are number one (DVT A009 on 02.12.2011).

Here the HoD reflects on what she 'was' doing in the past but does not indicate what she 'is' doing now. In her interpretation the changes have disoriented her from her college-learnt practices which she appeared to have had confidence in. 'They' had moved her from her comfort zone by introducing OBE, RNCS, NCS, GPLS and now 'another one', then CAPS. By implication the pronoun 'they' denotes that she became an object that could be acted upon and manipulated without her input or consent, thus compromising her identity as the knower in her classroom.

These changes 'confused' her and other teachers (she uses third person 'we') to the extent that 'all those things' had eroded confidence, trust and hope among teachers. In her case, however, she has pinned all her hope in GPLMS (the strategy added a mathematics component and hence changed its name) and CAPS which 'cater for all children' and therefore 'are number one.' By implication it means OBE, RNCS and NCS catered for some children and not all children. In her hope for change she appeared to confuse GPLMS, a provincial strategy for improving curriculum implementation with national curriculum policy such as CAPS and NCS. Quite clearly, she conflates the two, and is therefore challenged by, the difference between a policy and a strategy. The problem is also her failure to recognise the similarities between the NCS and CAPS. Her

disappointment with *C2005, RNCS* and *NCS* resulted in a positive attitude to change, that yielded solace in CAPS and thus prepares her for a mind shift to the principles of the new, incoming curriculum. The question, however, is how she has been working with curriculum changes she distrusted for all the years she had been in education.

From Bronfenbrenner's (1994) ecological theory we realize that curriculum change in the case of the HoD had acted as a stimulus (Cleave, Jowett and Bate, 1982) and built confidence in the impending curriculum development process. Her faith in CAPS required sharing and supporting by the upgrading of the whole system in an ecological way for it to materialize.

60% of teachers I interviewed in the two schools appeared not to understand the difference between the terms 'curriculum', 'policy' and 'strategy'. As illustrated in the above quote, the teacher understood GPLMS and CAPS as the same thing. Similarly, OBE is constructed as a curriculum of its own distinct from the NCS and RNCS.

There will be friction if curriculum policy changes and teachers choose not to change in line with the policy. The transition from NCS to CAPS meant a shift from an autonomous curriculum model to a strictly prescribed curriculum model. This meant a return to the prescribed model which OBE and NCS had abandoned. Such prescriptive change risked evoking old memories and old teaching methods, and hence conceptions of literacy among teachers who were already in the system before the introduction of OBE. Elements of what had been abandoned as colonial methods were recycled under new packaging and a new name. As such it was imperative that the transition to CAPS be carefully disseminated and diffused to the user system in the schools to avoid confusion.

Some teachers appreciated, though, that change was inevitable and that it was up to them to stay abreast with the changing times (DVT A0012 on 02.12.2011). Both teachers and deputy principals reported that they had been significantly challenged by the effects of unstable policies. The deputy principal of Nellus reported the school lagging behind national curriculum developments, getting information on changes to the curriculum 'some years' later, and not getting adequate details on the said changes (DVT A0012 on 02.12.2011). She cited the example of the number of subjects to be taught in the foundation phase which she said was not clear.

During the course of my data collection and class visits, the two schools in this study received instruction from the district offices (an exosystem effect) to the effect that teachers were to teach cursive from grade 3 upwards. This change from the popular Nelson script came a few weeks after the GPLS had also incorporated mathematics into its strategy. The incorporation of mathematics meant that the name had changed to GPLMS. The following comment by one teacher who had been teaching for 34 years, who still taught English language and Arts and Culture at grade 4, sums up the confusion over the multiple changes in curriculum policy among teachers:

> T: Maybe I must bring in the factor of age. At my age it's difficult to move from point A, B, C and to D. Even after ten years I wouldn't because I am from the old school of thought. It was working for me back then and I knew I had to drill, repeat and … you know. I know things change and I have to change too. I once said to my friends, what can you expect from a confused teacher? The children will also be confused. Because the moment you think you know this and you are comfortable with it, they change it. So we stay changing every time. I tell you the changes are too much. They are just too much (DVTA028 on 25.05.2012).

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The 'age' factor and 'the old school of thought' are critical factors in the change equation. The teacher here demonstrates the effect of stagnation or resistance to change on learners, 'the children will also be confused'. As such, a mind shift was critical if the curriculum change was to succeed. While the teacher accepted change as necessary, its frequency and volume resulted in fatigue as teachers could not cope with the multiple changes in policy and instructions coming from higher offices through information received at workshops and through administrative circulars. The communication itself was also compromised because it was not efficient and clear.

While teachers wanted and expected changes to the curriculum, which one teacher at Kolo characterized as 'mixed up' (DVT A008 on 02.12.2011), the pace at which the changes were coming into the system appeared to be a negative factor. This was compounded by teacher quality issues. As this teacher shows, 'the moment you think you know' it takes time, 'even after ten years,' to drill new concepts in some teachers' heads, build confidence in them and acclimatize them to new practices.

Teachers appeared to lack confidence in their own abilities to deal with curriculum changes and thus became anxious over what else was going to be required of them as well as the implications of their inadequacy in the changing areas. Changes in the curriculum, to them, meant that other changes were underway. A sense of lack of capacity to deal with change, 'the moment you think you know'… 'you are comfortable'… was apparent in teachers' insecurities and discomfort. As such their attitude towards the changes became mixed in a system they felt did not have adequate stability and did not capacitate them to deal with the demands of their job.

Bureaucratic processes appeared to limit the flow of curriculum information into the schools. Apparently some of the changes that should have been implemented in the distant past (such as

the alignment of subjects to be taught in a primary school to remove Technology, EMS and Natural Science and matters related to approaches that enhanced learner agency) had not been acted upon or reached the district and these were now coming piled up with more recent innovations. Another example was the methodological change that accompanied the introduction of GPLMS in some classes. So timing became an issue as shown in this comment:

> T: What I can say is, I believe they are not so certain about what exactly they want us to do as teachers and it's so frustrating because you go for workshops with this programme. When you are busy learning the programme they will shift to another programme. And it's so frustrating. You as a teacher you end up not knowing exactly what to do. And if you are frustrated as a teacher what is going to happen to the learners? You understand me? That is why I say, to me, the education system is no longer as it used to be. It's so mixed up (DVT A008 on 02.12.2011).

The teacher here expresses her lack of confidence in curriculum planning as a whole as she 'believes' that 'they' - excluding herself and probably others and by so doing literally refuses ownership of the curriculum - are not 'certain' of what should be contained in the curriculum documents, leading her to 'frustration'. Her irritation, anger, disappointment and weariness, all characteristics of frustration (which she uses twice), appeared to be exacerbated by the training which she perceives as botched since 'they' jump from one 'programme' to another. On careful consultation with the teacher it was clear she was using the term programme in place of curriculum.

Frustration is a critical factor in transition studies. It had the effect of blocking a mind shift that is indispensable in transition. In the end teachers got so confused they 'end up *not knowing* what to *do*'. Given that teachers trade knowledge in their profession, not knowing and more so what to do, critically compromises them and their profession. Teachers must know. The expression 'no

longer as it used to be' implied that the curriculum was once fine but somehow got muddled up along the way. I took this to mean that in the balancing act of transforming Bantu education through OBE, RNCS and NCS the result was a mixture which did not produce anticipated outcomes as originally conceived.

Frustration affects teacher enthusiasm and can cripple teacher morale, resulting in underperformance in the classroom. In my view a combination of confusion and frustration did not augur well for curriculum transition. Another teacher remarked bluntly,

> T: We are not happy at all. We are very confused as teachers. We do not know which is which. We are not happy with the whole set-up. All these things come one after the other. As you get used to one routine they come and change it. It's like every year you have to be work-shopped afresh. That gets confusing (DVT A029 on 03.05.2012).

The collective confusion illustrated by the pronoun 'we' among teachers highlighted here is one of lack of knowledge of 'which is which.' Teachers are in the business of transmitting knowledge and keeping them in the dark on issues directly affecting them was bound to yield confusion, anger, and frustration which could easily be vented on the learners. Like her counterpart this teacher was irritated by frequent changes that called for on-going workshops, which she clearly disliked. Teachers here appeared unhappy with the way changes in policy as well as strategy were communicated to them.

The case of changes to the curriculum appeared to be exacerbated by the nature of training teachers received at workshops to prepare them for implementation in the classroom. The workshops were often two-day afternoon sessions and week-end or holiday programmes that borrowed into teachers' private time.

T: It's the time we must have with our own lives. We have homes to visit, children to tender and relatives

to bury. How do you like it when your work has to follow you home? Those workshops are nonsense,"

(DVT A031 on 07.06.2012).

Training workshops on policy changes were not favourable to teachers who saw them as 'useless crash courses' (DVT A033 on 07.06.2012) and 'burdensome' (DVT A023 on 22.05.2012), bringing very little or no improvement to their practice (DVT A033 on 07.06.2012) and 'nonsense' (DVT A031 on 07.06.2012).

The training was seen as mere lip-service and gave teachers the impression that whatever was taught to them was trumped up, rushed and not well researched and hence, inconclusive. In that light, the training was seen as not supporting, evaluating and developing teacher quality. This finding is similar to that by Schleicher, (2009) and later by Dixon, Excell and Linington (2014) who found that the attitude of teachers to workshops was quite negative. As such virtually all teachers interviewed in this study reflected a negative attitude to in-service training they received on curriculum change and indicated they hardly benefited from the workshops. Ms Fire, a senior teacher, remarked that she did not see much in the content of the workshops.

T: As an old guard I would say the mistakes of the past cannot be corrected overnight. They need time. Now new

teachers cannot write on the chalkboard. The system does not train them that. With the move to cursive we are

having both teachers and children learning how to write cursive. Remember most of the old teachers are phasing

away on pension. Who shall teach these young teachers? All these changes are confusing. It's the bottom line"

(DVT A029 on 03.05.2012).

This teacher brings in the aspect of lack of skills among teachers as a result of flawed training. To her the inability to write cursive among young teachers pointed to deficiencies in training. To this teacher only old teachers were trained to both write and teach cursive, and that 'these young

teachers,' whose teaching skills she clearly doubted, required further training on basics such as writing 'on the chalkboard' in the appropriate script. This statement captured the teachers' low confidence levels amongst themselves and how macro factors such as quality of training would eventually impact on their different conceptions of literacy and hence affect the ways in which teachers assist learners' transition through the two phases. Poor training, then, contributed to the confusion and frustration among teachers.

Despite cursive being a requirement for grade 3 as specified in NCS, the learners had reached grade 4 without the skill in both schools. Among grade 4s upward was also the issue of whose responsibility it was to teach this 'new' writing script. Teachers' handwriting on the chalkboard clearly showed they required staff development on this important skill. As such there was no immediate implementation of the innovation until the time I left the schools in June 2012. Teachers continued to write on chalkboards without due diligence and care. However, I checked with three other local suburban schools and found that cursive was taught from grade 3 upwards. The delayed implementation meant that children were being further disadvantaged in transitioning, and that there was some level of dysfunction in the two schools in this study. Already the learners were falling behind from the outset of their transition into this form of writing. Even then, it could be argued that teachers probably realized that teaching cursive was less important than teaching other literacy skills.

Teachers' situation was compounded by the mismatch between the teaching materials provided and enforced by the district office and the realities of the children for whom the lesson plans and assessments were meant. While saving teachers from paperwork, the same teachers viewed teaching files and their lesson plans received from the district offices as divorced from the actualities of the classes they dealt with. Their opinions, supported by observation data, showed

that lesson content was often pitched higher than the level of their learners, with this criticism (by teachers) louder in Kolo where learners lacked adequate grounding in English. Mrs Fire, a very hard-working teacher, argued that the incoming CAPS system of spoon feeding the learner would ultimately kill the education system. To her it was all about attitude and motivation of the teacher, more than availability of fancy equipment. Teachers followed these lesson plans dogmatically with or without conviction, she retorted. If the class lagged behind in one area the teacher had no flexibility to attend to areas of their children's weakness. Noted one HOD:

> T: I think there is very little a teacher can do. It's the offices above who must withdraw their teaching schedules and files and leave us to operate as we best know how. Teachers are confused, so how can learners not be confused? Why are you expecting miracles from confused teachers?" (DVT A033 on 07.06.2012).

The fact that the HoD here doubts what teachers could do with materials that did not match learners' cognitive and intellectual levels expresses her confusion over what power had been left with the teacher in a prescriptive curriculum model. She seemed unhappy with the system of prescribing content, instruments and methods to teachers and hence advocated the withdrawal of teaching schedules. In her discomfort and frustration with the way teachers were treated she claims teachers 'best know how' the business of the classroom should be transacted but get confused if there is interference through prescriptions divorced from their actualities. To that effect, she even questions the logic of education authorities expecting 'miracles' from confused teachers and confused learners. The HoD went further to say:

> T: That's why I said crash courses. They train you for a day or two and when they come for supervision they expect miracles. Before you understand one thing, another comes. Before you get to grips with that, yet another is cast upon you. You know, we become confused as teachers on how we will manage. In my thinking the learning areas must be cut drastically. I think we only need Health (I don't know where this

came from, probably an old apartheid era subject), English, Afrikaans, Social Science – so our children may know where they came from – but the ones like Natural Science, Technology and EMS can be introduced gradually as children mature. They may introduce Natural Science in grade 5, Technology in grade 6 and EMS in high school. That subject should not have space in the primary school curriculum (DVT A033 on 07.06.2012).

It is clear that teachers felt the number of subjects was too large, with particularly Technology, Natural Science and EMS finding disfavour among teachers. She appeared amenable to changes in subjects in readiness for CAPS but was unsure of the nature of the changes as earlier indicated in this chapter. This teacher went on to suggest that Natural Science should be changed to environmental science, a plausible suggestion quite in line with the centrality of environmental awareness today but possibly also reflects an attempt to return to apartheid subjects.

The complaint about time and sequencing of subjects is a significant issue. The teacher here indicates that at grade 4 the curriculum is clogged with subjects she deems unnecessary. This observation resonates with that of Taylor (2012:3) who alleges that "no resource is more poorly used in South African schools than time." In the HOD's view teachers get stressed with issues of 'how' to 'manage'.

The thread cutting across teachers in the two schools was that curriculum change was necessary but the way it was now coming was trumped up, leaving them confused. The confusion was a result of the timing of the change (the chronosystem), a perceived lack of skills to deal with some of the changes, lack of knowledge of what was in the new curriculum, the mismatch between the change and the reality they confronted every day in the classroom and also a result of poor preparation for such change. The combination of these factors led to frustration with the system as a whole, which could then cascade to the learners. Such frustration impacted on their practice

and inevitably affected their constructions of literacy. In the end the attitude towards introduction of CAPS was mixed. Teacher attitude to change has implications for implementation in that those not ready for it could remain in their old ways of teaching at the detriment of children's academic and intellectual development.

5.5 Teachers' Conceptualisations of Literacy

In the previous section teachers' compromised knowledge of some aspects of their job was a significant finding of this study. Also important was the lack of teacher agency to study the curriculum documents on their own and seek clarity on pertinent issues, resulting in them being susceptible to confusion and frustration that adversely impacted on their practice. Such compromised knowledge positions meant that teachers' conception of learners as literate subjects was weak. Teachers' constructions of the literacy capabilities of their learners could give a clear indicator of their conceptions of learners at any specific grade level. Such expectations could be both individual and collective (at school level) but also must be in line with the dictates of curriculum documents. To align such conceptions, communication and staff development meetings on literacy related issues become paramount. Such in-house staff development would align expectations on learners as well as clarify curriculum policies, strategies and practices.

Communication shapes strategy. A sociocultural conception of such in-house training would see this as empowering teachers as well as bridging the gap for those teachers whose content knowledge was compromised. Communication between teachers within and across phases on the literacy and transitional progress of learners is also integral in the teaching process. Such communication could be formal or informal, oral or written, direct or indirect. Through interviews and observation, I engaged teachers across the two phases to establish the state of

affairs in each of the two schools regarding the levels of interaction and communication of teachers in respect of learners' performance.

5.5.1 Inter and Intra-phase knowledge

There are practices in these two schools that are inimical and militate against transition. Teachers' clear knowledge of what happens or is taught across phases and across subjects, at a micro level, within the same grade is very important. When teachers know what is taught to learners by fellow teachers of other subjects within the same grade, in the grade ahead and the grade before, they are in a position to better prepare learners for impending skills, remedy recurring challenges and discuss amongst themselves issues pertaining to learner literacy development. Communication between teachers of the foundation and intermediate phases, as well as among teachers within the same phase and grade, is very important during transition.

There did not appear to be adequate knowledge or communication between the foundation phase and the intermediate phase teachers in order to facilitate transition and harmonize expectations of the teaching and learning of children. This observation was shared by all staff in the two schools. When applied to teaching and learning, the ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner and Morris, 1998) enlightens that during the course of the year teachers need to know what the other is doing at any given point. Grade 3 teachers were expected to talk on the subject content they would be handling during a particular week, the topics taught at any part of the week, the assessments and the performance of their learners at any given time in any given test. This study established that this was not the case. Teachers hardly communicated with one another within grades, across grades, as well as across phases. As a result each teacher created a 'mini state' in

their own classroom and during their own lesson with minimum external oversight. The following interview with an HOD at Kolo captures the issues quite succinctly:

R: So, is there communication between grade 3 and grade 4 teachers in your thinking?

HOD: No, not really!

R: Does it mean, then, that grade 4 teachers do not know what grade 3 teachers are doing at any given point during the year? And on the same note do grade 3 teachers know what grade 4 teachers are teaching to their former class at any given time?

HOD: No, not at all. They don't. They have no idea of what we are doing because we don't have meetings. They don't know what we are doing. I told them where I came from we had meetings of grade 3 and grade 4 teachers to share information on learners and syllabus content. In our case the only person who usually comes to our side is the deputy principal. She picks our books and takes our tasks to moderate them. Maybe she is the one who communicates with the grade 4's because she teaches in grade 4. She is the only one who knows what we are doing in grade 3. She was actually surprised when the learners did not know how to read and write. She is the one who probably communicates with them (DVT A010 on 07.12.2011).

The HoD clearly points out that the two phases operate semi autonomously with the deputy principal as the only link between them. Even the deputy principal was 'surprised' to discover reading and writing exertions among learners and the HoD says 'probably' she communicates with 'them' in the 'other' phase. This implies that the deputy principal does not communicate such business with this HoDs phase, leaving her in doubt if she does so with one phase and not the other. The surprise at learners' poor reading and writing competences was confirmed by the deputy principal who acknowledged the discrepancy and associated it with the grade 4 performance slump, as well as lack of appropriate gradation of content between grades 3 and 4, among other reasons. She noted the poor reading and writing among learners and promised to take this up with the teachers in the school at large.

Teachers blamed the lack of communication on the gap created by the specializations that begins at grade 4 upwards, among other reasons. Remarked one grade 4 teacher:

> T: So, what is there to talk about with people who have no idea of what we teach here?" (DVT A0028 on 07.06.2012).

The teacher here clearly sees nothing in common between foundation and intermediate teachers to the point of questioning even the mere suggestion of curriculum and professional 'talk' between teachers of different phases. To her, foundation phase teachers 'have no idea' of 'what' is taught in the intermediate phase. I took having no idea to mean ignorance and the 'what' to mean the content taught at that level 'here'. She would probably see no reason for her to know what happens in the other phase too. This finding is quite disquieting because it works against the spirit of promoting ecological, concrete, school-wide literacy practices.

Nearly all teachers, HOD's and deputy principals confirmed the absence of communication between the phases and appeared to awaken to the discrepancy during interviews and discussions. As a result of the absence of shared knowledge and shared experiences the expectations across grades were significantly different. Grade 4 teachers appeared to mourn receiving learners who could hardly read and write into grade 4.

A grade 4 teacher in Kolo, Ms Sizwe, was convinced it was not her responsibility to teach literacy skills to learners. She noted that;

> T: Sometimes you give them work to do and you find you can't even understand what is written in their books. It's just muddled, it has no meaning. I mean wrong sentence construction to an extent that even the learner him/herself does not understand what they are writing. When it comes to reading, they cannot read," (DVT A027 on 07.06.2012).

While the teacher appeared to have clearly studied the learners she had received into grade 4, she still maintained someone must be responsible for the correction of the discrepancies she had correctly noted. She asked:

> T: I mean when you say I must teach them how to read and write in grade 4 or grade 5, how did the child get this far without reading and writing skills? If I have to teach them how to read and write in grade 4, what were they doing in grades 1, 2 and 3? Do you just push them? That's very unfair to grade 4 teachers to abrogate one's responsibilities in the belief that those ahead shall correct the mess (DVT A027 on June 7, 2012).

The emotive and rhetorical questions, observations and concerns of Ms Sizwe bring out clearly the sensitivity of issues of children's reading challenges and their effect on grade 4 teachers. Such disappointment is seen as 'unfair' and an 'abrogation' of responsibility that leads to 'mess'. Ms Sizwe's comments were viewed by foundation phase teachers and deputy principals in the two schools as employing a blame game in which intermediate phase teachers accuse foundation phase teachers of not adequately fulfilling their mandate while the latter accused the former of being divorced from reality.

A teacher of eight years of teaching grade 3 confessed she did not know what content is taught at grade 4 in both English and Mathematics. Likewise, all the four grade 4 teachers of English and Home Language in this study expressed ignorance of what literacy elements are taught at grades 1, 2 and 3. Similarly, intermediate phase teachers did not know what even their colleagues teaching the same grade teach in their respective subjects. Teachers also do not know what their colleagues, teaching other subjects to the same grade and learners as themselves, cover and to what depth. An ecological situation (Wehmeyer and Webb, 2012:8) could possibly be one where each of the parties is aware of what the others teach at any given time of the year. This would

then allow for continuity and inter-marrying of subjects. However, each one of these teachers had certain expectations they held on literacy levels of learners. Asked why teachers did not know what their fellows teach in different subjects within the same grade, the Life Orientation teacher at Kolo remarked:

> T: I don't know because it is a situation that is just like that. Everyone cares for their own subject (DVT A0025 on 07.06.2012).

The teacher in this case expresses ignorance of what is taught in other subjects within the grade she teaches and associates her lack of knowledge to tradition, which she appears to regard as the norm. Teachers could better "care" by sharing knowledge about their pupils. This finding speaks to the earlier assertion that teachers lacked basic knowledge not only of the curriculum they are meant to teach (Taylor, 2012) but also of basic concepts in line with their job, which I referred to as compromised due to a long history of teacher training and other factors.

5.5.2 Teacher Conceptions of Learners in Transition

How teachers view learners in transition speaks to the enthusiasm, attitude and concern they are likely to invest in their teaching. The following conversation on learner challenges with a grade 4 English teacher at Kolo reveals teachers' lack of understanding of the mesosystem, what happens in the next classroom, resulting in them expecting higher literacy skills in learners than the learners actually possessed. It also reveals how teachers lacked basic pedagogical content knowledge:

> T: To be honest writing is the worst, the worst. When they talk they may express themselves but whatever they may say cannot be put in writing. It's a problem. Spelling, some learners even require special education. They can hardly form a sentence.

R: But what exactly can they not do, that you expect them to be able to do, in terms of writing?

T: Capitals, mixing capitals and small letters, spelling.

R: Are they able to shape letters?

T: Not really.

R: Do they space words properly?

T: Not at all.

R: Do they punctuate?

T: Not at all. In a wrong way.

R: How is their pen-handling?

T: Not all of them.

R: And pen-to-paper attrition? *(teacher looks confused)*. I mean the level of pressing on the paper when they write.

T: I don't know. Some press too much and some press very faintly.

R: Are they taught how to do this?

T: Even us teachers don't know that. It's the first time I am hearing about pressing of the pen what what. To be honest we didn't know about that

….

R: What about stroking? Do they practise the strokes properly?

T: How?

R: I mean up-down movement of the pen when writing a letter following the appropriate directions it must take. For example when writing the letter K, and k *(demonstrates)*.

T: Not at all.

R: Do you know stroking yourself?

T: Like I said to you I don't know those things.

R: Then the problem is probably with the teachers who do not know what they must teach.

T: I never went for training in these things. Maybe because I only have two years' experience it is still inadequate (DVT A024 on 07.06.2012).

This interview exposes critical questions on the expectations as well as the capabilities of teachers to assist their learners with necessary literacy skills required in grade 4. While the teacher expected learners who could write properly, she was unclear of the conventions of teaching these skills to the learners, worse still the register in those fine skills. While it may be argued that some of the terminology I used during the interview such as stroking and attrition may be unfamiliar in South African pedagogic discourse, the argument is thwarted by the teacher's failure to also understand the elaborations and demonstrations used during the interview as here recorded. As could be deciphered and later confirmed by the teacher, the teacher's lack of familiarity with basic terminology used for teaching such skills speaks to issues of teacher training and a clear lack of basic knowledge. The fact that primary school trained teachers (intermediate and senior phase) do not receive training on how to teach handwriting speaks of a discrepancy in the training these teachers received. Teaching of handwriting cannot be the preserve of the foundation phase but rather the preoccupation of the whole primary school.

Analysis of the above teacher's response raises issues of teacher quality, teacher training and teacher commitment to duty. This teacher's lack of knowledge of what is taught in the foundation phase contributes to her bemoaning the quality of the learner she received in grade 4.

The teacher's perceived weaknesses in foundation literacy pedagogy and discourse would see her struggle to remedy learners with handwriting challenges. The fact that she recommends special education for learners who cannot 'spell' or write properly formed 'sentences' in a language they had only been formerly exposed to for less than a year (8 months as of the time of the interview, including holidays) speaks to issues of teacher quality. Also pertinent from her contribution is the fact that the foundation phase does not meet the literacy expectations of intermediate teachers in terms of reading and writing.

The phased implementation of CAPS, beginning in the foundation phase in 2012, appeared to aggravate the communicative dislocation between phases. In both schools the two phases operated like separate schools within the same school. Each had its own classrooms and separate play area. Bronfenbrenner's hypothesis 42 states that "upon entering a new setting, the person's development is enhanced to the extent that valid information, advice, and experience relevant to one setting are made available, on a continuing basis, to the other." In both schools there was a deputy principal for each phase and two HODs in the intermediate phase for each school. Meetings were usually held separately between deputy principals and their staff. As such there was no continuity too in the experiences of the learners. Seldom, meetings called by the principal were held jointly.

In Kolo there appeared to be signs of communication between the two phases initiated by this researcher's constant probing whether each party was aware of what the other was doing. One intermediate phase HOD at Kolo noted that,

> T: There was no communication between the two schools (phases) but of late there has been some communication. We share; we tell them what we expect of the learners when they come this side. So I think in 2-3 years it will be fine (DVT A0023 on 22.05.2012).

Power issues immediately surface here when they 'tell them' what 'we' expect of learners when they move to 'this side'. The statement insinuates that the teachers are not equal partners in their interaction over learner affairs. Even then the HOD mentioned time lines of two to three years when she was in a position to influence such changes, at least at the meso level. The same HOD went further to explain that communication depended on the leadership and teacher quality in a school.

> HOD: It depends on the institution. When we started here way before I became HOD the foundation phase and the intersen phase treated each other as separate schools. There wasn't enough communication between the two phases. But now things are beginning to change because we sometimes hold joint meetings to discuss the learners' progress in totality (DVT A023 on 22.05.2012).

The lack of communication between the two phases appeared to have a detrimental effect on the transitional literacy of learners. The lack of communication is largely blamed on historical factors and management styles, with this teacher now 'beginning' to see positive change as they 'sometimes' meet to discuss learners' progress. The teacher, thus, sees progress towards unifying the 'separate' schools into one through collaborative practices such as joint meetings.

This finding evokes the view that divisions in the primary school system into phases are arbitrary and hence, subject to challenge. There did not appear, in the two cases, to be any justification for dividing the school system into phases. While phasing works in other places and schools, in these two schools it seemed to hinder academic and literacy development. The result was a disjointed school system that caused dislocations between one grade and another. The structuring of education into phases appeared to be examined with rigid transition points and contestations of power. This seemed to impact on learners' literacy practices as they moved across the artificial educational boundaries. Content scaffolding became difficult when one phase appeared

to be starting afresh rather than building upon what already existed, leading teachers to begin from the wrong imaginary rung. Even then, the issue of specialization caused teachers to abrogate literacy responsibilities to others unnecessarily.

Observation data showed that teachers do not tell grade 3 children what to expect when they get to grade 4. There appeared to be a need to sit children down and advise them on how the grade 4 system works so that they are not surprised by change in situations. Even on entering into grade 4, children appeared to require a moment of explanation on how the system worked. If both sides were aware of the *modus operandi* of the other then it could have been easy to deflate the academic shock among learners by making known what to expect and what to do when confronted by such change.

5.5.3 Teacher Expectations of Learners' Literacy

Grade 4 teachers mentioned the following expectations upon the foundation phase graduates they received each year:

- Able to at least read with reasonable fluency in their home language.

- Able to construct meaningful sentences in both home language and English.

- Understand a 'reasonable' amount of English words.

- Decode English.

- Have a reasonable speaking and good listening vocabulary.

- Understand basic English.

In terms of writing the teachers mentioned the following:

- Shape letters correctly and neatly.

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- Have a neat handwriting.

- Write legibly and sensibly.

- Compose meaningful text.

- Draw, shade, label, illustrate, etc.

- Spell reasonably.

In order to understand what teachers meant by the terms neat, fluent, reasonable, sensible, understand and meaningful I relied on teachers' comments in written work (where I could find any). The terms neat, reasonable and good combined appeared to mean writing that had no erasures, had properly shaped and sized letters and a generally legible and well-spaced and patterned print, sitting properly on the line. It meant teachers appreciated academic literacy practices when they come across them although they may not enforce or be able to teach these skills. 'Fluency', 'sensible' and 'meaningful' appeared to relate to decoding that was close to natural speech, with appropriate intonation, pronunciation and speed. While the attributes expected by teachers of learners in grade 4 were in line with the stipulations of both NCS and CAPS, in both grades 3 and 4 teachers' opinions these qualities were lacking in the majority of learners that were graduating from the foundation phase and moving to grade 4. To them the lack of basic literacy skills was a discontinuity that grade 3 teachers had normalized. The social practice of pushing learners with poorly developed literacy skills was compromising their practice as intermediate teachers.

In one instance a teacher indicated that learners came to grade 4 before they understood the morphemes, leading them to try to read English (decoding) by isolating the grapheme from the phoneme in a word, without blending the two. She indicated this was a problem inherited from introducing reading in home language separate from reading in English through the phonic

method. In 'my' the child would decode it as /m/ and /y/. In another example a grade 3 isiZulu teacher indicated that children find no relationship between /usehambile/ in isiZulu and the different meanings and translations that the word would assume in English. Depending on how it is intoned, the one word may mean /S/he has gone/ or become the question /Has s/he gone already?/. In her expert view teachers and learners were justified not to see any relationship between the two, and hence found no ground to base English language teaching on the home language. This view ran opposite to Hornberger (2004) who advocates continua of biliteracy.

Grade 3 teachers and deputy principals argued that grade 4 teachers were operating out of touch with their children. "Most of the teachers (in intersen phase) need to be equipped with teaching skills. Authorities have to do something" (DVT A012 on 02.12.2011), remarked the deputy principal of Nellus. The deputy principal here confirms the deficit in teachers' capabilities with regards teaching skills and calls for action by the authorities. If teachers could not teach, this would create challenges for the learners. By suggesting that 'something' had to be done I interpreted this to refer to the sociocultural practice of situated learning in the form of in-service training.

5.5.4 Confronting Transition

There was no formal orientation programme to explain the transition from foundation phase to intermediate phase in both schools. As such no teacher took it upon themselves to explain how things work out to learners. Bronfenbrenner's (2005) hypothesis 42 I cited in section 5.5.2 of this chapter enlightens here. A transitional orientation programme would have explained the issues of the increased number of subjects and their multiple teachers, the carrying home of books, the fast pace of learning, the value of the free period and how to make use of it, how to read the time

table and many other issues. I monitored how things developed between the end of the year and the beginning of the new year to see if such explanations would be given to children but teachers tended to treat these critical issues as if they were meant to be discovered rather than told. Upon entering a new setting, the learners' development was not enhanced because valid information, advice, and experience relevant to that new setting wasn't made available to the learners on a continuing basis (Bronfenbrenner, 2005). Children had to discover for themselves how things worked at grade 4. I thought this was a fundamental flaw that would impact negatively with learners' academic development in future. As one teacher later noted,

> T: This period can make or break a learner forever. For others adjustment is quick but for others it's a whole three terms lost (DVT A023 on 22.05.2012).

Justifying why such a programme was not in place, one intersen HOD mentioned that there was no time set aside for such things. Teachers had district office-monitored teaching schedules they could not deviate from. This brief conversation with the HOD sheds light on the conceptions of school authorities on the problem.

> R: But in the interim period, what are the teachers doing to enhance smooth transition?

> HOD: There is not much teachers can do because intersen teachers work on time. You have a strict timetable of lessons and content you have to follow from the district. You cannot deviate from it and start looking back (DVT A033 on 07.06.2012).

The HOD appears quite defensive. To this researcher this response meant a denial of the child of a basic right to information. The response also speaks to the gaps that existed between the two phases. Coming from a HOD, it also meant that leadership within schools could be another matter of concern. In the literature review I alluded to transitional factors in the macro, meso and micro levels of the education system. The deputy principal's comments show the level of fatigue

even at leadership in the meso level. Given that factors in the micro and mesosystems have greater impact on human development and hence transition, it would be expected of the HOD to take a proactive stance. In the light of the confusion and frustration among teachers, confusion among learners on reaching grade 4, the confusion regarding timetables and changing subject teachers, the 12% and 48% pass rate in the ANAs between the two schools and the lack of comprehension of what is taught in other grades as well as the absence of time set aside to simplify the complexities of foundation-intermediate interface, one would understand the extent of confusion/dysfunction in the two schools under this study.

5.6 Conclusion

While teachers contended with anxiety, confusion and frustration that resulted from the changed curriculum and its effects, learners were grappling with issues of transition that came with their graduation to the intermediate phase. As shown in this chapter, the factors took place at both the macro and the meso levels. What emerges from considering teacher experiences and how the macro-factor of curriculum change impacts on the meso-level, the school and teachers themselves, is the psychological impact this transition had wrought across the two schools. While teachers were battling to find their footing within the NCS to the CAPS curriculum, the learners were battling with settling in a new and higher grade with conflicting teacher expectations on them. Given the demonstrated knowledge limitations amongst teachers that aroused confusion and emotive frustration, resulting in varying attitudes to curriculum change, literacy development of learners was compromised. Such delivery appeared to result from a confluence of factors at the macro level, the meso level and eventually the micro level.

This chapter has demonstrated that, at a macro level and among other factors, curriculum change is a major factor in transitional literacy. The CAPS curriculum assumes that learners have had English as a subject from grade 1, with some aspects of language structure moved from NCS grade 4 down to CAPS grade 3. By extension this means that teachers and learners in both schools found the going tough in grade 4 as learners had not been adequately prepared for the academic, curricular and linguistic demands they met. As such grade 4 teachers felt their foundation phase counterparts had not prepared the leaners adequately for what they taught in the intermediate phase. The next chapter looks at the micro literacy realities in the two case schools and how learners experienced and dealt with the challenges that confronted them in their literacy journey.

Chapter 6: Foundation Phase Experiences, Pedagogy and Instructional Conversations

6.1 Introduction

Researchers in South Africa and elsewhere have provided evidence that learning through the home language is of benefit to the child (Brock-Utne et al, 2006; Hornberger, 2004; Bloch, 2006; Gains, 2009; Cummins, 1995, 2000a, 2000b; Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000; Desai, 2001; Heugh, 2001; MacDonald and Burroughs, 1991; Stein, 2008; Ramirez et al, 1991; Ball, 2010; Taylor and von Fintel, 2016; Vorster, Mayet and Taylor, 2013). While this assertion has achieved credence in the South African educational policy landscape, the matter becomes complex when the definition and identity of the home language becomes contested in a school context. This chapter focuses on how transition and learning through the different languages of teaching and learning (in this case isiZulu, Sepedi and English) in the schools enhanced or impaired the fluidity of literacy development and transition to the intermediate phase.

Like most African countries, South Africa is a multilingual society. Eleven languages are officially recognised as teachable language subjects in the school system, with some receiving specialisation up to university level. Multilingualism in itself is not a problem (Bamgbose, 1991; Hornberger, 2004) but rather a rich resource woven into the fabric of society. The problem comes in its operationalization in the classroom, that is, making sure the legal statutes are turned into classroom practice.

As in most countries in Africa issues relating to the status of indigenous languages vis-a vis the dominant, colonial languages have posed challenges to the structuring of education (DBE, 2010; Reeves, et al 2008; Bamgbose, 1991; Heughs, 1999; Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000). In South Africa the issue of the status of indigenous languages is a polemic issue often met with emotive and rather political overtures. As such, the current education and language policies seek to redress the

injustices of the past and, in the process, promote the use of indigenous languages in the foundation phase as LOLT. The policies then shift to English as the LOLT from grade 4 onwards, opening room for multiple interpretations and confusion (Reeves et al, 2008; DBE, 2009, Alexander, 2008; Fleisch, 2008).

This chapter answers the fourth research question of this study which probes the relationship between language practices in education and transition. The chapter traces the reading and writing experiences of grade 3 learners in their preparation for transition to the intermediate phase. From an ecological theory point of view, language is a critical aspect of both the person and the curriculum and, thus, is a resource, a force and a demand (Bronfenbrenner and Morris, 1998). Language is seen here as a significant factor influencing transition and literacy development in the two schools under this study. The teaching of English as a subject is given special attention because, even though Kolo begins foundation phase teaching in isiZulu and Sepedi, English becomes the medium of instruction for both schools from grade 4 onwards. How grade 3 English (speaking, listening, reading and writing) taught in the two schools is adequate for the academic and discipline-specific language demands of grade 4 becomes the import of this chapter.

I examine the role of mother tongue proficiency in school home language literacy (in the majority of cases where the learners' mother tongue is not necessarily the school home language) by comparing findings in this study to other studies that investigated the transfer of skills and sociocultural practices from home language to English. Understanding these aspects of transfer is important in English language teaching pedagogy and decision making regarding when and how to transition to English as the language of teaching and learning. It also supports identification of skills likely to have been learnt by students to support English literacy. Evidence in this chapter

shows that transition to English as the LOLT at grade 4 might be too early and not commensurate with the learners' literacy development after limited exposure to English in the foundation phase.

6.2 Multilingualism and the Classroom

Nellus Primary School (the straight-for-English school) had a larger overall enrolment (1500 pupils), classes twice the size of those at Kolo (vernacular to English and 1200 pupils), and even so when it had no classrooms in which to accommodate those learners. Given that there are no zoning issues and both schools are non-fee schools and quintile 1, parents appeared to see English and Afrikaans as important languages for their children. Also interesting was the finding that seventy-seven (77) out of the seventy-nine (79) teachers at the two schools sent their children to low density schools, as one teacher observed, "where the English is better, where they learn with middle-to-upper class children and have better facilities" (DVT A0035 on June 7, 2012).

The teacher here isolated English from Afrikaans as the pull factor for the decision on where teachers, and by implication parents, choose to send their children for their education. While issues of resource availability and social class/racial mix are also stated, it is clear that the language factor is more significant and hence stated first. Also evident from the comment are teachers' perceptions of themselves as middle class people, in this case teaching lower class children (and probably teaching them middle-to-upper class values and content).

Parents' and teachers' higher regard for English as compared to other languages appeared to be a force characteristic (Bronfenbrenner and Morris, 1998) that cascaded down to their children. Learners at Nellus appeared to treat those going to Kolo in low regard (resource characteristic) as

reflected by the derogatory comments they often made of the latter school. They nicknamed the school 'spinach' which one learner interpreted to mean vegetables. One learner explained that they regarded the education there as 'spinach' because "they learn in Sepedi and isiZulu" (DVT A0019 on April 2, 2012). Her views were supported by the other learners who seemed to enjoy their assumed status (demand characteristic) as learners of Nellus. On the other hand, learners and teachers at Kolo appeared to accept the fact that Nellus assumed a higher status than them. This finding relates to the fact that the learners appeared to sense, on both ends, that their home languages are less important, resulting in the weakening of their mother languages (spoken at home) in favour of the additional languages learnt at school.

Although few empirical studies (de Klerk, 2002; Bowerman, 2000; de Klerk and Barkhuizen, 2001) have been conducted on the subject in South Africa, it seems parents recognise the importance of having their children learn in their home languages but appear to act more on promoting English than on their expressed desire for mother tongue learning. Advocates of mother tongue based education may need to consider possible differences between parents' expressed desires and their actual language behaviours with their children.

6.2.1 The Home Language Factor

In multilingual communities such as that of Mamelodi in Pretoria East, South Africa, it is not always easy to identify the home language of a child. All the eleven official languages spoken in South Africa and others find reflection here. The children are largely multilingual and as such, their proficiency in any one specific language may be 'bastardized' (Mann, 2011). Code switching is a norm, including the emergence of a pidgin dialect which has since been named Sipitori (Mann, 2011). While schools here have specific home languages they teach, namely

isiZulu and Sepedi in the case of Kolo and English at Nellus, these languages are not necessarily spoken at home by the majority of learners. Eventually learners have a receptive vocabulary of a variety of languages they meet in the community. This context renders the issue of language difficult and complex. As I present later in this chapter the very choice and identity of what to call home language in a school becomes contentious. The teacher's home language, thus, becomes a fundamental factor in the communicative practices of any class in these schools.

The choice of the LOLT in a school is a critical factor in literacy development of learners. Teachers here have to deal with learners who speak various languages and do not necessarily speak the languages taught at school. To succeed in these schools a teacher should be multilingual as well. Those learners who understood the teacher's home language appeared to benefit, in some cases, from code switching, interpretation, translation and mediation through difficult concepts. This was particularly the case at Nellus where learners were confronted by English from the outset when none of them spoke English at home (see table 6.2). English was in effect an additional language to both teachers and learners.

In the case of Kolo the foundation phase teachers' home languages were not necessarily the same as the LOLT and that of the majority of the learners. As such teachers often switched to their own languages during teaching. Evidence from class visits and observation indicates that teachers tended to speak or explain in their own vernacular languages without due regard for those learners that did not understand those languages. Such practices appeared exclusionary. However, by grade 3 these learners would have acquired reasonable amounts of the language of instruction to see them understand what is said in class but not well enough to write it and reason through it.

Ms Phethile, a grade 3 teacher at Nellus affirms this point as follows: "And some of the learners can understand Zulu now because I will have to speak Zulu, that's my language. It's a problem really" (DVT A013 on 02.12.2011). The teacher here acknowledges the problem of disregarding other languages, and by extension the cultural funds that learners bring with them into the classroom. But she affirms her right to her own language which she claims 'some' learners 'can … now' understand. IsiZulu is temperately and unofficially learnt in this English LOLT class merely because it's the teacher's language. While the unintended outcome of the linguistic discontinuity and dissimilarity that led to the unofficial learning of isiZulu in this class disadvantaged some of the learners, it also enhanced biliteracy and bilingualism as the learners' linguistic and cultural resources were broadened. The table below compares the distribution of teacher home languages against those of learners who also shared the same languages.

Table 6.1: Teachers' home languages in the foundation phase

School	Class	Teacher	Teacher's Home Language	Learners Sharing Tr's Home Lge	Class Size	Class LOLT
Nellus	3B	Ms Phethile	isiZulu	13	69	English
Nellus	3C	Ms Bati	Tsonga	3	69	English
Kolo	3A	Ms Morena	isiNdebele	10	39	isiZulu
Kolo	3B	Ms Thula	Sepedi	23	39	Sepedi

Table 6.1 shows that the language of the teacher was not necessarily shared by the majority of the learners in three out of four classes under this study, and neither was it the LOLT. As such, code switching, translation, interpretation and other forms of mediating the language factor when

teaching complex concepts hardly benefited the majority of learners in three of the four classes. Observation data shows that in cases where teachers translate, code-switch and interpret, they hardly move to the other languages cognate to their own language. Even in Ms Thula's class where the teacher shared the home language with the majority of learners, nearly half of the class appeared disadvantaged by code switching, translation and other mediation factors as their understanding of Sepedi could not be ascertained.

Rutendo, a Shona speaking girl in Ms Thula's grade 3B class at Kolo indicated that it was her first year at the school and hardly understood any of the local languages. She did not understand isiZulu but had learnt a substantial amount of English over the two years prior to transferring to Kolo. Not much reading or writing in Sepedi benefited Rutendo between January and September 2011. Like others who spoke languages that were different to the LOLT and English, Rutendo had been rendered languageless by this situation. She was not alone in this quagmire, because all four grade 3 classes in this study were affected by this phenomenon. Learners like Rutendo who neither spoke nor understood those languages spoken in the classroom found themselves without a critical demand, force and resource that left them both socially and psychologically disempowered.

6.2.2 LOLT and Class Composition

 All the four grade 3 teachers for the classes in this study were multilingual even though they did not use some of the languages in class. Ms Morena's home language was isiNdebele and she also spoke Sepedi, isiZulu, Afrikaans and English. Ms Thula's home language was Sepedi and also spoke English, Zulu and Afrikaans. Similarly Ms Phethile was an isiZulu speaker but was also fluent in Sepedi, English and Afrikaans. Ms Bati was a Tsonga home language speaker and also

spoke isiZulu, English and Afrikaans. It is also important to understand the actual nature of multilingualism in the classrooms studied as this reflects the status and distribution of languages in the two schools. Table 6.2 below illustrates this.

Table 6.2: Home language distribution of learners by class

	Ms Phethile N 3B	Ms Bati N 3C	Ms Morena K 3A	Ms Thula K 3B
English	0	0	0	0
SePedi	16	17	2	23
IsiZulu	13	12	6	2
SeSotho	5	4	1	3
XiTsonga	1	3	3	0
Afrikaans	1	0	0	0
IsiNdebele	9	6	10	1
TshiVenda	3	2	1	3
IsiXhosa	6	8	5	0
Setswana	6	7	0	1
SiSwati	1	2	7	0
Other	8	8	4	6
Total	69	69	39	39

The selection of English as the LOLT at Nellus is understandable in light of the multilingual situation in the classrooms. In situations of linguistic plurality such as these English becomes the language of intermediation, especially when looked from the point of view of its global status. Its use in education beyond grade 3 is critical as tertiary education tends to be offered in English. Being the common language of the workplace, media, government and also associated with economic growth, high status and prestige (de Klerk, 2002:3; Bowerman, 2000:63) it is logical that parents of Nellus would elect to have their children taught in English. As such, the school attracted people from all walks of life including speakers of languages outside of those spoken in South Africa.

Nellus promoted Afrikaans as the first additional language. A close look at table 6.2 shows that only one child out of the 138 learners in grade 3 at this school spoke Afrikaans as the home language. Much as English was embraced as the LOLT, the same cannot be said of Afrikaans, which is still widely regarded as the language of apartheid. Teachers in the foundation phase had not embraced its teaching and had largely ignored it. The reasons for this could only be assumed to be the lack of time as only 10 minutes of oral teaching per day (see chapter 5) was scheduled for it and the history of apartheid with which the language is associated. As shown earlier, all the four grade 3 teachers listed Afrikaans amongst the languages they spoke.

Table 6.2 also shows that Ms Morena's isiZulu LOLT class (3A) at Kolo had only 6 isiZulu home language speakers out of 39 learners while Ms Thula's Sepedi LOLT class (3B) had 23 Sepedi home language speakers out of 39 learners. The figures need to be analysed in the light of the fact that parents choose the languages taught in the school for themselves through a democratic process. The languages so chosen become the school language policy. However, it would appear that once the home language decision is taken at inception the situation tends to stay unchanged forever. Despite the facts pointing otherwise, the LOLTs remained uncontested because the schools insisted on maintaining these to all parents who register their children there. This is in spite of the National Curriculum Statement 2005 stating clearly that 'all learners study their home language and at least one additional language as language subjects from grade 1' (DBE, 2010:7). The comment by one teacher at Kolo below relates to the origins of the discrepancy;

T:/When they come to register their children here we tell them. And they say 'no, admit my child. They will learn Sepedi.' But we explain to parents that here we have only home language Sepedi and isiZulu. You find a child is maybe a Shona but the parents will opt for Sepedi or isiZulu. So the parents choose the

LOLT for his/her child. You hear him/her say, 'let him do Zulu, Sepedi, Sotho', you see (DVT A008 on 02.12.2011).

The teacher makes it clear here that schools 'tell' parents to choose between specific LOLT or take their children elsewhere where alternative languages are on offer. Restricted between isiZulu and Sepedi the parent sacrifices by 'choosing' the language the child will have to learn. The fact that teachers 'tell' parents on registration also connotes that the choice of LOLT of the school does not remain open for ever. The same teacher further explained;

Our LOLT is (sic) isiZulu and Sepedi (laughter). If you go to the department to collect question papers they say, JK LOLT, Sepedi/Zulu and hand you the papers. That's all (DVT A008 on 02.12.2011).

The language choice is here confirmed by the practices of district officials (the exosystem) who also know, without questioning much, the LOLT for each school without expecting any changes over time, and by so doing ratify the status quo of the languages. So, once chosen the LOLT of the school hardly changes. As the teacher puts it, 'that's all.' It would appear that despite demographic changes that occur from time to time the language choices remain unchallenged, often leaving parents with no choice but to send their children to the nearest school even when the language situation is inappropriate for their children.

It is quite difficult to justify the selection of isiZulu and Sepedi at this school in the light of student home language statistics shown in table 6.2 above, given that the children have to access all learning through it. In the case of Ms Morena's 3A class it is clear that 33 out of 39 learners (85%) would begin school in a language in which their understanding is either limited or new to them. After considering other languages cognate to isiZulu the number of learners who may understand isiZulu rises to 28, representing a significant 71%. Even then another 29% remains unaccounted for. The case was similar in Ms Thula's Sepedi class.

English, which becomes the first additional language in this school, is not only foreign but was hardly taught due to the 10 minutes time allocation discussed earlier in chapter 5. Given these circumstances it was difficult for the majority of learners to access learning. Despite some of the languages being cognate, this resulted in children completing the foundation phase unable to read and write competently and skillfully in both home language and FAL English at levels equivalent to their grade. This discrepancy meant that there was no continuation of biliteracy (Hornberger, 2004) for the learners since oral-literate, receptive-productive, similar-dissimilar, and convergent-divergent as well as simultaneous-successive exposure to their linguistic capital had not been set up in the initial stages of children's literacy learning. The context, development, content and media of biliteracy became inappropriate for the linguistically and culturally diverse learners. Thus, children completed the foundation phase without adequate literacy and numeracy skills to see them confront the demands of the intermediate phase where they were expected to apply skills they did not have.

The choice of Sepedi is understandable in Ms Thula's 3B class at Kolo as it is spoken by the majority of learners. Table 6.2 shows that 23 out of 39 learners spoke that language at home. However, a significant number of 16 learners in this class speak other languages. There did not appear to be any mechanisms to cater for these at all. It is these kinds of situations that Stanovich (1986) calls the Matthew effect.

Good schools are known to show concern for the development of every learner. These schools tend to have transition programmes in which speakers of other languages are given immersion courses (Probyn et al, 2002; Ball, 2010) in the language of instruction to a level where they can reasonably access learning in these languages before learning can begin in such languages.

Children in the two schools in this study only meet the official home language at school but this was not supported by both the home and neighbourhood environments. The neighbourhood environment is very important because it constitutes the children's mesosystem. The ecological systems theory states that it is the micro and meso systems that have greater influence on learning and transition (Lewthwaite, 2011; Bronfenbrenner, 1994). In both schools the LOLT at grade 3 was generally alien to the majority of learners, with the exception of Sepedi in 3B at Kolo. The child speaks the school home language – be it English, isiZulu or Sepedi – at school only but hardly hears or speaks the language at home or in the community where they live. This causes a disjuncture in the child's learning and tends to compound the challenges of acquiring literacy skills in the foundation phase. In most cases, as shown through table 6.2 the language spoken at home is actually not learnt at school. Equally, the language spoken at school is neither learnt nor spoken in the home, thus creating discontinuity in language and learning.

Said the intersen HoD at Kolo Primary School;

> HOD: The thing which confuses the whole system, not necessarily our own school but the system at large is the many shifts in points of emphasis. They emphasize mother tongue instruction today; tomorrow they change to argue for English as the language of intermediation. They are not only confusing teachers but are confusing learners too. We have here, as you very well know, learners from Zimbabwe, Mozambique and so on. A learner from Zimbabwe speaking Shona comes to our school and is taught in Sepedi or isiZulu; goes home to speak Shona again; moves to grade 4 and is now taught in English. So now the child has Shona, Sepedi or isiZulu and English. The whole system confuses learners instead of teachers (DVT A0023 on 22.05.2012).

The HoD reiterates the case of 'confusion' in the 'whole system… at large' and principally among learners due to 'shifts' of interpretation of the LiEP (DoE, 1997) which she maintains has macro-effects and creates problems in 'the whole system' of education. The school language

policies were clarified at the inception of CAPS (DBE, 2009) but found these learners already affected by previous faulty interpretation of the said policies. It would appear that the LiEP (DoE, 1997) calls for the teaching of English and an African home language from grade 1 upwards. The Minister of Basic Education (DBE, 2009:50), in a statement notes that; "The teaching of English as a first additional language must be given priority, both in the provision of appropriate textbooks and reading material, and in clear specification for teaching mother tongue and English as the language of teaching and learning in parallel. English must be taught from Grade 1."

The decision that home language and first additional language should be taught at different times scales creates potential challenges for schools. Different teaching time scales on the timetable means difference in importance and status. Policies elsewhere (such as Zimbabwe and Kenya) where the promotion of indigenous languages – Shona and isiNdebele on one hand and kiSwahili on the other - has hardly compromised literacy development and posed problems of interpretation advocate that English and the home language be given equal time (Dyanda, Matavire, Dozva and Kuyayama; 2006) supporting each other in children's literacy development. The *CAPS* documents allocate different time scales for home language (up to 6 hours per week) and English (up to 4 hours per week) in the foundation phase. While this approach promotes the teaching of local languages I find this, in the light of the two case schools where literacy rates are low, to be a fundamental flaw that may affect the curriculum in due course given that English becomes the LOLT from grade 4 upwards.

6.3 LOLT and Literacy

Observation, interview and documentary evidence in this study shows that learners taught in English from grade 1 tended to exhibit higher literacy skills than those taught in vernacular for the same period. The literacy skills here relate to both reading (in all its forms) and writing (all types). Straight-for-English learners could read more fluently and write more expository forms of work than their counterparts in the same geographic location. This evidence is also corroborated by the Annual National Assessment results (2010) for the two schools. Kolo produced a pass rate of 12% in literacy while Nellus had 48% for the same period. It must be pointed out that learners in Kolo took the test in their school home languages, isiZulu and Sepedi, while Nellus learners took the same test in English, which in effect is not a home language to them. While it may be argued that other factors need to be interrogated as well, this preliminary finding calls for attention. The lack of a writing culture in vernacular languages may be implicated as a factor impeding literacy through local languages.

On entry into grade 4 the learner was confronted by seven new subjects all taught through English. Research (Ball, 2010; Lao, 2004) informs that if children are forced to switch abruptly or transition too soon from learning in their home language to learning in an additional language, the first language (HL) may be attenuated or even lost. Even more importantly, their self-confidence as learners and their interest in what they learn may decline, leading to lack of motivation, school failure and other negative effects.

Given that the learners of Kolo were formally introduced to English from September 2011, it is clear that they could not have adequate English language with which to access learning in the seven subjects they met for the first time in grade 4.

An example of this was when I distributed parent consent forms with the help of the teacher to all learners. The teacher requested that I explain to the learners what I wanted done by their parents. I then went on to speak in simple English and asked the children to bring the signed consent forms the next day. 9 out of 36 learners did not bring back the forms. On asking them in isiZulu if they had listened to my instructions the previous day they indicated they had not understood because I spoke in *Skuwa*[12]. They had not understood. In another situation I asked a grade 3 learner what he enjoys reading. He looked to his friend in a manner that prompted the friend to translate my question into his mother tongue. Immediately after the translation he answered in a one word holophrastic sentence; '*ang'kethi*[13]'. We had not communicated.

As such, language alone was such a huge demand and resource factor in children's learning at grade 4 level in Kolo until such a time that they had acquired a sufficient amount of the language to allow for meaningful learning. This applied to both English and the two vernacular languages. The content in textbooks was inaccessible; the teachers became strange speakers of a different language and the grade level content bizarre. With nearly all learning coming through the home language in the foundation phase, for Kolo learners, language was a defining factor for success or failure on entry into the classroom. Children thus required adequate English and home language learning prior to grade 3, which the learners in this study did not have. The situation was to take a twist on entry to grade 4 where a language transition to English became necessary, particularly for learners at Kolo. Those in Nellus had the rudiments of English and adjusted better, faster and exhibited better literacy skills.

6.3.1 Home Language Literacies

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[12] A Sotho word for English
[13] isi Zulu word for I don't choose

Most of the learners did not appear to have adequate language proficiency to enable them read and write in the languages of instruction in the four classes studied at grade 3. Basic education should primarily comprise functional literacy and numeracy (Coombs in Mncwabe, 1990), where language is the vehicle of learning. Because of the multiple languages learners are exposed to, by both default and design, learners end up with rudiments of multiple languages which they sometimes switched, translanguaged and mixed. The exposure, among other factors, affected their proficiency in the standard forms of languages in both communication among peers and instruction in the classroom. Phonological, semantic, syntactic and morphological and pragmatic development (Wolf, 2007; Makalela, 2007) appears to be affected when the child has mere rudiments of different languages, without firm grounding in any one of them. Noted one teacher at Kolo:

> T: Even their home languages aren't enough. Some of them just understand and speak a mixed language of Sotho, Tswana, Zulu, English and so on. You can't tell which language they really know. They speak everything in one sentence (DVT A008 on 02.12.2011).

The teacher here makes the observation that learners have mere rudiments of different languages spoken in their environment that leave them without adequate proficiency in any one language. The use of 'even' and 'just' connotes deficiency or lack of sound competence, resulting in one failing to 'tell' what language the child speaks at home language level. If the learners speak 'everything in one sentence' as the teacher claims here, that would impact their reading and writing and affect comprehension of matters read or written. There is an intricate relationship between language and literacy (Biemiller, 2006; Hornberger, 2004) to a point where an insufficient home language base may have a significant effect on acquisition of different literacies, as the teacher here points out, resulting in incorrect sentence construction both in

speech and writing. Given that texts come in standard forms of one particular language, and that academic writing demands the standard form, a learner with mere rudiments of different language varieties would struggle to both read with comprehension and fluency in the standard form as well as write in order to learn. The teacher's observation was supported by learners who appeared to have ideas but could not express them in words. Asked what teachers could do to help children to read well, one child at Nellus had this to say;

> L:/the teacher must…, the teacher must…, the teacher must, eish. The teacher must do something that the
> children can find it easy (DVT A003 on 01.12.2011).

The child appears to stick to her words, or at least run out of words to mean what she had to say. Words like 'something', 'thing', 'nice', 'that', 'there' etc. are here read to indicate a restricted code (Bernstein, 1990) where the speaker's vocabulary is limited, resulting in the speaker not finding the appropriate words to use. The exclamation 'eish' here shows the learner was struggling with self-expression. With a restricted language base for the demands of school learning, learners were bound to encounter challenges on transition to the intermediate phase where the curriculum demanded academic and discipline-specific language. Similarly, intermediate teachers were forced by the circumstances to deal with language matters first before focusing on their subject content.

6.4 Transfer of Literacy Skills

This study attempted to understand the transfer of literacy skills from the vernacular home language to English. Cummins' (1984) interdependence hypothesis asserts that second language competence depends upon the level of development of L1. Cummins (1984) argues that if learners achieve cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP) in L1, this competence can be

transferred to L2, thus permitting learners to participate successfully in academic learning in L2. The literacy skills learnt in L1 are transferred to the learning of L2. Examining research on transfer of literacy skills from the home language to the first additional language (in this case English) is important in that such studies shed light on the skills literate speakers can build on when acquiring English literacy. Language becomes both a force factor and a demand factor for curriculum access. Likewise, it helps indicate what new skills learners will need to learn as they acquire English literacy (August, 2002:4).

6.4.1 Longitudinal Studies

Two major longitudinal studies that address the relationship between amount of schooling in the home language and subsequent performance in English report that higher level of literacy skills in the native language are associated with higher performance in English literacy. The first is a study by Collier and Thomas (1989) which found that children between ages 5-7 might acquire English for academic purposes if they are provided with a minimum of 2 years of continuing cognitive academic development in the home language, and take up to 4 to 5 years while living in an environment of the second language.

The study by Collier and Thomas (1989) relates to learners of a middle class background. We are instructed by earlier studies (Bernstein, 1990; Krashen, 1985; Fitzgerald, 1999; Edelsky, 1991; Gersten, 1996 and others) that there is an association between social class and language learning. The learners in this study come from, and live in, lower-class situations and cannot be understood from middle class contextual lens.

The findings of this study make interesting reading. What comes out clearly is the fact that learning a language takes a long time but is also faster when one lives in a community of the

target language. Also interesting is the observation that some literacy skills are transferable from the home language to the target language if the learner has been adequately equipped with such skills in the home language. These factors are not cogent to the cases under this study. Learners exhibited poor literacy skills in their school home language in Kolo and learners in Nellus were assumed to be learning in a LOLT that in fact was a second, third or even fourth language to virtually all of them. As such, it was not reasonable to assume that they were adequately equipped with literacy skills in English, especially given that they also did not live in an environment of that language.

The second study for my purpose is that of dual language instructional programs for English second language learners by Ramirez, Yuen, Ramey and Pasta (1991). This was a quasi-experimental longitudinal comparison of three types of programmes: English-only immersion, early exit bilingual and late exit bilingual. This study is instructive because it attempts to examine the amount of home language instruction conducive to literacy development in English. After 4 years in their respective programmes English language learners in the immersion strategy and early exit programmes demonstrated comparable skills in Mathematics, language and reading when tested in English. The researchers concluded that instruction in the native language does not impede the acquisition of English skills.

My study also sought, among other things, to understand if skills learnt through the home language enhanced English learning in the two schools. Of particular interest in this vein of the study were the learners in Kolo who had learnt throughout the foundation phase through Sepedi and isiZulu. Based on evidence in learners' exercise books and their oral skills during class discussions and at play as well as close analysis of the languages concerned, there only appears

to be little, if any, association between home language literacy proficiency and English learning and literacy. This matter is dealt with further in chapters 7 and 8.

Beside English and the African languages basing the written literacies on the Latin alphabet and the decoding principles used being similar, the relationship between reading in home languages and in English did not appear to go much further. To some extent it may be argued that learning reading in the home languages first tended to impede articulation and comprehension in English due to different phonetic, syllabic and vowel systems (Makalela, 2007) between the languages. While Sotho/Sepedi has thirty-nine (39) consonantal and nine (9) vowel phonemes and isiZulu has thirty (30) and five (5), English has twenty-two (22) consonants and twenty-two (22) vowels respectively. Even the syllabic combination and grammar rules are quite different. Table 6.3 below illustrates some of the basic differences among the three languages.

Table 6.3: Differences between English, isiZulu and Sepedi

	Sepedi	isiZulu	English
Language group	Bantu	Bantu	Germanic
Tonology	Complex with high and low tones. Tone can be grammatical and semantic.	Less complex with limited tonology.	Complex with many rules but limited tonology
Vowel Consonants Vocabulary examples	Nine. (Contrastive) Thirty-nine. Mme Jwang Kamogelo/amogelo Dumelang/dumela/thobela Hlokomela Ee Aowa Hle Thusang Tsamaya	Five. (not contrastive) Thirty Omama Njani/utshani Samukhele Sakhubona/salibonani …………….. Yebo Cha Hhaibo Ncedo Hamba	Twenty-two. Twenty-one. Mother/missus/madam How/grass Welcome Hello Beware Yes No Please Help Go

Sentence Construction	Ke a leboga/re a leboga O kae/lekae? Le nna kegona, ke a leboa O be le leeto le le bolokegilego Sala gabotse/salang gabotse/ sepela gabotse/sepelang gabotse Bitso la hao ke mang? Ke gopela nako …………………	Ngiyabonga/siyabonga Unjani/Linjani? Ngiphilile, siyabonga Hamba khahle Usale khahle/Lisale khahle Ngubani igama lakho? Isikhathi sithini? Uphumaphi?	Thank you How are you? I'm fine thank you Have a safe journey Good bye What is your name? What is the time? Where are you from?

There does not appear to be much in common between Sepedi and English, neither is there any between isiZulu and English. To assume that a language whose orthography is based on French (Sesotho/Sepedi) could form a basis for learning a Germanic language such as English may be to overburden the learner. However, this study posits that teaching the subjects/languages concurrently, at equal time intervals, would speed up literacy development. Other than the general phonological knowledge and orthographical skills, there was nothing much to build on.

A child who reads *O be le leeto le le bolokegilego* may find it difficult to associate this with the sentence, 'Have a safe journey' (Makalela, 2007). Similarly, 'isikhathi (time-**object**) sithini (what-**subject**)?' has a reversed construction pattern of the English pattern **SVO** and hence based on contrasting rules. Not much transfer of component literacy skills could scaffold the learner into grasping the two languages. Table 6.3 above provides many other areas of difference. Magagula (2009) and Ntaoleng (2004) provide a more comprehensive outline of the differences between Bantu languages and English.

Examining transfer of component skills from home language to first additional language is important in that it sheds light on the skills literate speakers can build on when acquiring English literacy. I sought to establish if the learners could break the English code using skills learnt through the home language (biliteracy). While the learners had known, at the time of grade 3, that speech is made of small units of sound it was difficult to pin this knowledge to home

language since the same amount of knowledge was evident in those who had learnt through English from grade 1 as much as those who learnt through Sepedi and isiZulu. As such, learners had reached the understanding that there is a relationship between the phoneme and the grapheme (alphabetic principle).

Learners need to understand the phonemes, morphemes, grammar rules and their exceptions and word formation rules in a language before they can speak and finally write in the language. Children taught in English from grade 1 were clearly (and obviously so) better in the language as judged from their ability to use the language in oral discussions and in writing. They could participate better in lessons and had acquired reasonable amounts of the language to enable them learn through it. They could ask questions and express themselves fairly, enabling them to play with those that could not understand their mother tongues. So, English gave them leverage to relate with other people, interact with them and appreciate that different languages did not make them different in any way. They appeared more comfortable with high frequency words they would meet in their everyday studies. Diversity in these situations became a cultural tool for literacy and social interaction.

This, however, could not be said of learners from Kolo who had not learnt through English in the foundation phase. They still needed to learn phonological processing and understand the grapheme-phoneme (letter-sound) rules and the various exceptions to such rules. To these learners, there had been a contradiction from the outset in that much as they learnt in their vernacular 'home languages' during lessons they were expected to answer questions in Life Skills and Maths in English that they did not have. Teachers resorted to the use of one word answers during oral lessons and in written work, labelling of diagrams and copying sentences

from the chalkboard to alleviate this discrepancy. These learners, then, required more grounding in English than their counterparts in Nellus.

The difference between the learners, and the functional gap between Nellus and Kolo, is in part depicted by literacy rates in the Annual National Assessment results (48% and 12% respectively). Results of the ANAs 2010 correspond with observation data and other document analyses. As such, delaying the introduction of English in the hope that skills in home language will be used to learn English might be philosophically appealing but practically inaccurate, leading to a possible "mismatch between the dream and the reality" (NCCRD, 2000:20). To a large extent, the differences in performance between the two schools reflect ineffective teaching practices as well as language choices and pedagogical practices at Kolo. Similarly, the low literacy rate at Nellus appears to relate to the language practices there. Language choice affected teaching practices, literacy development and ultimately transition.

The case of learners' inability to break the English code was more evident during free periods as they interacted amongst themselves. During these periods and other interactive times the learners at both schools would translanguage (Makalela, 2015) through the different languages that existed in the classes. Only in rare instances when they were trying to speak to students of out-of-South African (foreign) origin would learners attempt English in both cases. This gave them opportunity for realistic practice. It needs to be reiterated at this point that learners appeared to understand different languages although they would speak particular dialects themselves. Most Sotho/Tswana/Sepedi speakers understood each other and translanguaged easily. Likewise isiZulu, isiNdebele, Xhosa and Swati speakers could communicate easily.

6.4.2 Benefits of Multilingualism

The linguistically rich classroom environment appeared to benefit the learners in multiple ways. In Kolo interaction was entirely in Sotho, Sepedi, isiZulu and isiNdebele and learners seemed to mix these languages without any problem, switching from one to the other even in one sentence. Said one learner to her friend; "Aowa (*Sepedi)*, mina *(isiZulu)* angila *(Ndebele/isiZulu)* problem *(English)* naleyonto *(Xhosa).*" On being streamed at grade 4 it did not take long for the learners to get used and start playing with one another. Very few remained rooted in their chairs for long hours few days after classes were reconstituted.

On one such occasion a learner who had been tasked by one teacher to write down names of noise makers complained that his responsibilities had been taken away from him by another learner. A friendly argument began which involved five learners of different languages. Each of them spoke in his/her language but it went on to finality in that multilingual fashion. I read this sociocultural and multiglossic context as providing immense opportunities for a bi- or multilingual pedagogy teachers could exploit to enhance literacy.

The multilingual nature of the classes in this study made it easy for learners to appreciate (strong resource factors) other languages and hence appreciate cultural diversity. Even then, learners at Kolo had not adequately understood the basics of English to enable them to access knowledge through it.

6.4.3 Transition to English LOLT

A lot of work was required of teachers to collaborate in enhancing acquisition of English to magnitudes that could enable basic literacy development. Studies by Fitzgerald (1995) and Biemiller (2005) show that there is a relationship between English vocabulary and reading comprehension, and that speakers of languages that have many cognates with English have an

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advantage in recognizing English vocabulary. Such a relationship between English and Sepedi or isiZulu could not be established during lesson observation, in texts and in children's exercise books. Even if the relationship existed, this would require instruction for the learners to exploit it. Makalela (2007) points out the different challenges speakers of South African languages have in learning English at the morpho-syntactic, phonological, discourse and pragmatic levels. The fact that teachers questioned learners' literacy development in the home languages speaks of the difficulties learners encountered with a first language they immediately had to learn through on entry into grade 4.

Sentence construction among learners at Nellus was fairly developed to allow for meaningful orality. This was so because the learners had learnt substantial amounts of English from grade 1 despite the tendency of teachers to code switch each time they encountered challenges in explaining concepts. Since teachers at this school did not teach Afrikaans as the first additional language, it was neither possible nor reasonable to investigate learners' proficiency or their application of English skills in learning that language. The sample work below by a grade 3B learner at Nellus shows that the student had acquired significant amounts of English language over the three years of primary schooling to allow her to express herself meaningfully in writing.
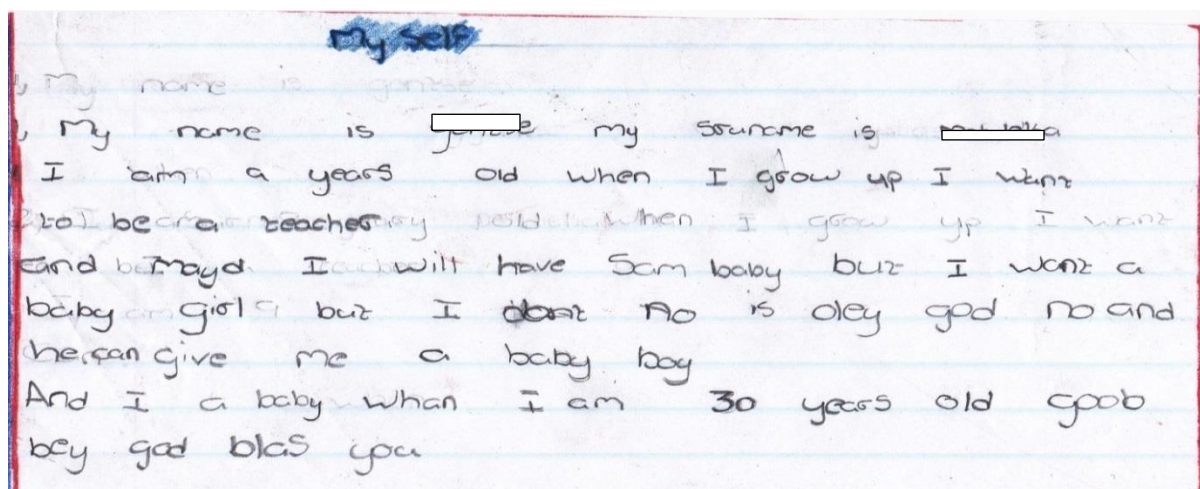
It is easy to follow what the learner above intended to say in the first paragraph but the challenges of additional language learning become apparent in the second paragraph onwards. The grammatical, spelling and expressive errors, sentence logic in the construction tends to mar the quality of the text to the level of pidgin. Yet this could pass under the CAPS assessment criterion when considering the learner wrote unaided. The sample piece below from Nellus reflects the amount of language learning other learners would have acquired on completion of grade 3. I deal with literacy challenges in chapters 7 and 8.

After three years of English learning the literacy and linguistic challenges remain apparent. Morpho-syntactic (as in 'I must not come late then we go home me and my friends), phonemic awareness (the learner hears 'den' in 'then', 'wac' for work, 'dedent' for didn't, etc; then 'bat' for but and 'let' for late), tense sequencing (as in 'we go home me and my friends'), and

pragmatic/discourse features (such as 'I cried for my ma'm') still needed attention as the learner above progressed. Despite exposure to English for 3 years the learner above did not appear ready to transition to an English based school curriculum.

Learners require strong instruction in English at the foundation phase if they are to transition to instruction through it at grade 4. Unless learners acquire substantial literacy in their mother languages it is unrealistic to require of them to transfer component skills from their mother tongue to English. While phonological awareness could be transferable depending on the languages, word knowledge, word reading and comprehension strategies needed to be well taught before any issues of transfer could be considered. This is in line with Snow et al (1998) who suggest that if native language reading instruction does not precede or coincide with English reading instruction, then English reading instruction should be delayed until a modicum of oral English proficiency has been achieved (August, 2002). This would allow orality and literacy to develop concomitantly (Fitzgerald and Noblit, 1999; Weber and Longhi, 1996).

At Kolo learners were getting instruction through a language they could not speak or understand in the hope that they would learn both the language and the content concomitantly. The work below shows the learner's failings with English at the same time of the year.
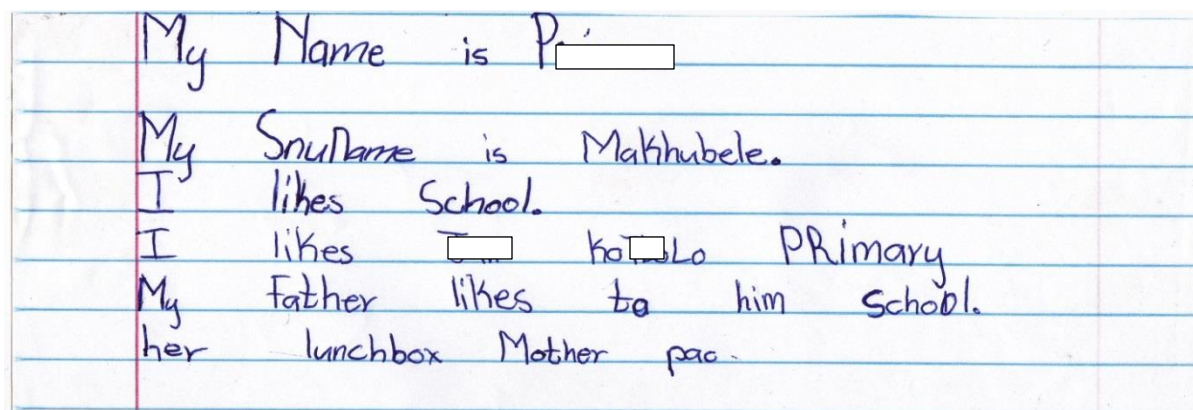
The learner here has not acquired substantial amounts of vocabulary to liberate him to express himself in writing. As a result the work is short, fragmented and hardly communicates the student's sense in some sections. The learner has not understood the art of continuous writing. The errors are clearly related, among others, to a weak English vocabulary base and underdeveloped literacy skills. As such it is quite challenging to understand the link between 'mother' and 'lunchbox' in the work. Without the requisite oral support learners such as Kamogelo's chances of using meaning to support decoding would be compromised. Kamogelo is evidently not ready to transition to English LOLT.

6.5 Teachers' In-Class Practices with Language

The way teachers use language is instructive of the habits learners acquire in the process of learning to listen, speak, read and write. I was also interested in understanding the communicative habits that occurred in the classes in this study. Teachers used language to communicate the content of their lessons, enhance discipline and exercise control in their classrooms. Often the language they used was academic and found reflection in the texts children eventually read and wrote. As such, the integration of orality, reading and writing was often seen as a useful strategy for teaching literacy skills. In the end there was variety in the application of senses during learning.

Using conversational, narrative and stylistic (discourse) analysis techniques, I analysed some tape recordings of grade 3 and 4 teachers over the period and the kind of comments they made during interaction with learners. In this respect I begin with data obtained from Kolo where English was the first additional language. I needed to understand how much English and other languages learners were exposed to in their day-to-day interaction. This was important because it

helped answer one of the key research questions of this study that sought to establish the schools'

interpretations, and hence application, of the language policy. Also important to note was the fact

that there was rich language representation in the school and hence cultural diversity.

6.5.1 The Grammar Lesson

Teachers use both formal and colloquial language in their everyday dealing with students. Since

most of the communication is through speech, teachers tended to seek to communicate the

message rather than care for appropriateness of speech in terms of the use of complete standard

sentences, word choice, tense, grammar, pronunciation and so on. This happened quite often and

errors were as frequent in speech during lessons as they were during enforcement of discipline.

An example of this is shown in this extract report from my lesson observation notes of Ms

Thula's English language lesson observed at Kolo on the 10th of November 2011. The topic was

not written on the board but I guessed it was on the present continuous tense.

> *Ms Thula sticks a chart on the chalkboard and asks her grade 3B children (Sepedi class)*
>
> *to construct sentences in the past tense, then the present and 'advert' (sic), adjective and*
>
> *'progresive' (spelt with one 's'). Immediately, a learner asks to see the spelling of the*
>
> *word progressive. The teacher moves to write the word on the chalkboard. A clever girl*
>
> *(Rutendo) comes up and constructs the sentence, "I am a girl". The teacher asks her to*
>
> *write the sentence on the chalkboard for others to see. The girl changes her mind and*
>
> *writes "Mother feeds the baby." I presumed she was either repeating a sentence she had*
>
> *encountered before or was one of the few with some English language background.*
>
> *The discussion on why 'feeds' and not 'feed' elicits various responses including*
>
> *"Because it's one children". This answer is accepted without any correction. The class is*

now asked to change the same sentence into the past tense. Every now and again the teacher comes to the table to consult the lesson notes from the district office lesson plans provided to teachers.

The lesson takes a twist and the teacher asks the learners to give the 'adverp' (sic) of feed. Ms Thula gives an example of the adverb in a sentence that she writes on the board as, "Yesterday the small mother cooked tomatoes". She says she had mixed up things and walks to consult her lesson notes. She goes to the chalkboard and erases 'adverp' and writes 'adjective'. This leads to the sentence being revised to read, "The small mother is cooking tomatoes".

After writing this sentence the teacher attempts to explain the adjective by telling students that "when using the adverb you must remember HOW". She reiterates this by demonstrating how a child is fed. She asks three times, "how" and at each time the children shout, "Slowly". After the demonstration the teacher proceeds to ask; "Anyone who can give me a sentence in adverb form? Gloria, form an adverb sentence." One big boy appears to be bullying a smaller desk mate. He is not concentrating on what is happening in the lesson. The teacher hardly notices this.

"The ugly cat is what tense?" asked the teacher. The children answer that it is an adverb and teacher agrees. The teacher appears contented that the learners have learnt adverbs well. She moves over to me to ask if she can change over to teach reading. I answer that I was there to observe the natural progression of learning and thus the teacher was not supposed to mind my presence but to continue with her business as if I was not even there. So, the decision about what to do next was entirely hers.

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The teacher moves on to distribute readers to the class entitled "Frolics and Pranks Book 4 Supplementary". There is a copy for everyone so I was able to get a copy as well. Children are asked to open page 2. Upon opening children immediately attempt to read the comprehension passage aloud. The teacher immediately stops them and says she had not asked them to start reading yet. One learner is asked to read aloud as the others point with their fingers at the words being read. A boy struggles to read one sentence and on completion hands over the task of reading aloud to the class to someone else. After some struggle and continuous correction the teacher takes over and reads to the class. After reading through the passage she asks questions on what the passage was about. Finding that most learners did not understand what the passage was about, the teacher retells the story in Sepedi. She explains the story to some detail in vernacular before asking for the vernacular word for world.

Among the questions asked by the teacher were the following: "What does the ball of wool doing? Where do the wool rolls? Where in the garden?" Several one word answers are given.

The above lesson points to some of the interesting events that take place in the classroom with language. Just because teachers speak a range of languages doesn't mean they have enough knowledge to be able to teach those languages. Ms Thula clearly does not have adequate knowledge of the rules of English to empower her to teach that language. Her weak understanding of the difference between an adverb and an adjective, tenses and parts of speech, the spelling errors (progressive, advert/adverp) and other errors of grammar (where do the wool rolls?) and sentence construction (small mother; Gloria, form an adverb sentence) speak of insufficient content knowledge. Likewise, allowing wrong sentences to go uncorrected leaves

learners without critical learning. Instead of 'because it's one children' the learner could have learnt to construct a full sentence and use the appropriate singular form for 'children'.

Learners in Ms Thula's class could struggle with English due to limited pedagogical practices in her teaching and her own knowledge of the structure of English. The nature of literacy events that take place in Ms Thula's class, to a large extent, reflect the dysfunctional nature of Kolo. I have to point out that Ms Thula's case was not an isolated one. Interviews with some teachers were quite challenging in terms of deciphering what they meant. In some cases it was clear levels of comprehension and grip of English were inadequate. Teachers need sound knowledge of English to enable them teach it to their learners. By the end of this lesson I was still confused as to whether the lesson was on adverbs, adjectives, tenses or general sentence construction. Ms Thula had not written the topic on the chalkboard.

Children need to be exposed to sound language practices for them to learn. Teachers must use standard language as often as possible for children to acquire the academic forms of the language and thus use these to access learning. A sentence such as 'The ugly cat is <u>what tense</u>?' or 'Gloria, form an <u>adverb sentence'</u> cannot suffice in formal learning situations. Continued exposure to such language forms results in them being acquired by learners and used both in writing and during play, in and outside of the classroom.

The outline of the above lesson points, among other things, to a class of children who could hardly read with fluency or comprehension. When learners struggle to read out one sentence, point with their fingers the section of the text they are reading, and can hardly answer questions based on a passage read or heard, it speaks of weak reading skills. It also highlights the futility of assuming that skills of reading in a vernacular language are easily transferrable to English

reading without the knowledge of both languages. Ms Thula's class found reading in English quite challenging although they could attempt reading in Sepedi. Grade 1 teaching methods and language levels were required which I thought Ms Thula did not have, prompting her to periodically check the lesson preparation done for her by the district in advance.

6.5.2 Code Switching and Mixing

Ms Thula chose to re-tell the story in Sepedi upon realising that learners had not understood the story. Teachers need to use teaching and learning methods that allow for interaction, for speech development and the exercise of oral competence. Such methods should exploit the language learners are expected to use in written work during oral discussions. As such, orality needs to be emphasised, through both reading aloud and creative sentence construction in preparation for written work.

There were high incidents of code switching or mixing in each of the schools amongst African teachers. When concepts were not coming out clearly teachers tended to translanguage (Makalela, 2015; Bock and Mheta, 2009) for the benefit of the learners. What was interesting was the fact that each of the teachers would codeswitch to their own mother tongues, particularly lesson could pass without it. in Nellus where English is the LOLT. The prevalence of code switching was such that hardly any lesson could pass without it.

While such practices could be expected in Kolo, the reasons for code switching could be questioned in some cases where even disciplining learners was done in vernacular both in and outside of the classroom, denying learners opportunity for practice. In isolated cases this was done for the benefit of the teacher whose discomfort with English was quite apparent. Not all people are comfortable using English when speaking to someone they know can understand

another local language. While this may be the case, some of the translanguaging was a result of the system itself. Observed one teacher of 24 years' experience at Kolo;

> T: The issue of code switching is not one of our making. They don't have any English at all. So if you continue in English you will be speaking to the moon. Remember they started learning English in September, barely 2 months before coming to grade 4. They don't have English at all but intersen teachers forget that. We get into class during English time and speak in English. Some who get support from home and the media can hear you but those who cannot hear are lost. They would miss all the learning. Grade 3 to 4 is the period when those slow to catch English begin to suffer until they leave school (DVT A023 on 22.05.2012).

This teacher's observation is as blatant as it is painful. So, it is not one of teachers' making but the situation which makes them speak 'to the moon' if they continue in English. While exposure to the target language speeds acquisition, the lost may never be found from that point going forward. They 'suffer' to their peril. Such is the significance of good language practice when learners eventually move to grade 4. One teacher, Ms Phethile, defended code switching but points to the danger of exclusion.

> T: I have to switch to my own language to explain concepts I feel learners are challenged to grasp. If I don't, then no learning may take place. The only problem is that when I switch to my isiNdebele only few learners will understand. Even that does not stop me because Ndebele and Zulu, Xhosa and Swati are mutually intelligible. If my Sotho or Pedi was fine I could then translate (sic) to it. Unfortunately only those that understand my language benefit from code switching. At this school the level of English is better but I think in these other schools that is a major problem. A teacher can only switch to her/his own language (DVT A013 on 02.12.2011).

Ms Phethile's observation concurs with observation data that established that teachers generally translanguage to one language outside of English even where there are multiple other languages

in the class. Naturally, such practice becomes exclusionary. Even then teachers appeared unnerved by it and proceeded to switch when need arose. Given that these teachers were fluent in other languages as their profiles indicated, it is not easy to understand why teachers 'only' switched to their 'own' languages in teaching situations. Equally, Ms Phethile sees surrounding schools as 'these other' and sees code problems in their file.

6.5.3 Learners' Attitude towards English

Learner attitude is a critical factor in ecological studies (Lewthwaite, 2011). Attitude can be either a push factor if positive or a pull factor if it is negative. Attitude is a critical component of the person part of the PPCT model. Bronfenbrenner and Morris (1998) define such factors as force characteristics which they explain as distinct and inherent in every individual. Force characteristics determine whether the learner becomes active or passive in the transition and developmental process. A positive attitude is healthy for learning while a negative attitude to the target language may slow down the rate and pace of acquisition/learning.

Teachers encouraged learners to read English readers during grade 3. All readers distributed to learners during the period of this study were English readers. However, it could not be ascertained whether this was a result of the love for the subject or the unavailability of readers in vernacular languages. This observation is made in the light of data reflecting that Kolo had more English readers and barely any in the indigenous languages they taught. This discrepancy was also evident in Nellus where readers and textbooks in Afrikaans were not available at grade 3 and 4. This situation saw the grade 4 Afrikaans teacher only relying on the teacher's book for her lessons.

The disproportionate distribution of textbook resources among subjects, to some extent, reflects the value schools regard for English above indigenous languages. The reasons are quite simple to understand; English is the language of access and academic progress beyond grade 3.

Children loved speaking in English. They did not mind making grammatical mistakes when speaking to the teacher and among themselves. Situations to attempt English abound in the two schools because of the presence of learners of foreign origin who did not understand local languages. Even in instances they ran out of words to express themselves one could easily read the interest, passion and excitement that came with one successful sentence. During interviews with learners in Kolo it was clear learners would have preferred to communicate with me in English if they had more elaborated codes. Such interest was evident at Nellus where most of the learner interviews were successfully held in English. Here learners could stutter but eventually find their way, with the researcher's help.

Asked how often they read, one learner explained;

> L:/We read half, and tomorrow we read half, tomorrow we read half and tomorrow we read half' (DVT A002 on 01.12.2011).

One wonders what half means in this sentence but what is clear is that the learner communicates, and with interest. An interesting case was when a learner was trying to solicit further explanation of the meaning of the word 'generation'. The learner decided on probing by saying, "Do you mean my mother has a mother, and her mother has a mother, and her mother has her mother, and her mother?" Her non-verbal signals at that moment were quite interesting. At Nellus one would enjoy some unfamiliar, original and unsolicited sentence structures as learners enjoyed the use of language and the liberty in expression that came with attempting to use it.

6.6 Conclusion

Wolf (2006) observes that language is critical in education, and that without it everything collapses. This is shared by Shohamy in Makalela (2015:3) who asserts that "language is life." Learners required a sound language and literacy base in the LOLT in order to transition smoothly from grade 3 to grade 4. Learners in the two schools espoused a positive attitude to learning English that teachers could exploit to their advantage in developing literacies amongst learners.

One of the research questions in this study relates to the language policy interpretations in the two schools and how such interpretations enhanced or affected literacy learning. Data in this chapter shows that language choices and practices affect literacy learning and development. As such mesosystemic factors within schools compounded the challenges of transition when learners switched to English as LOLT from grade 4. Grade 3 had not adequately prepared them for such language transition. The practices and linguistic competences of some teachers at the micro level also compounded the transitional challenges learners faced. When disadvantaged by policy factors, having incompetent teachers aggravates the situation. The next chapter focuses on strategies used by teachers to enhance transition from the foundation to the intermediate phase.

Chapter 7: Resources, Strategy and Pedagogy

7.1 Introduction

Reading and writing are the cornerstones of the foundation phase curriculum. The literacy experiences learners undergo during grade 3 determine, to a large extent, their success or failure in grade 4 upwards. As such the resources, strategies and pedagogies teachers and learners use to meet the academic and curriculum demands of each grade become crucial for success or failure going forward. What teachers believe are the necessary literacy practices that can adequately equip their learners with skills demanded by the school system beyond grade 3 has a bearing on the skills learners acquire prior to grade 4. The first and third research questions of this study sought to establish whether or not foundation phase reading and writing in primary schools adequately prepared learners for the academic and literacy demands of the intermediate phase. Using a sociocultural theory of literacy on one hand and the ecological systems model on the other as theoretical lenses, this chapter analyses the strategies used by teachers and learners to negotiate the transition from learning to read towards reading to learn and how these strategies can be understood and explained in relation to the increasing academic and cognitive demands of the literacy curriculum.

I use the term strategy in a 'fuzzy' way (Griffiths, 2004) as there appears to be "no consensus" (Ellis, 1994:529) on its definition. The lack of consensus probably emanates from the use by researchers of other terms that are more or less synonymous with strategy, such as learning behaviours, tactics, techniques and to some extent methods. A plausible definition, though equally inconclusive, contentious and elusive, is given by Oxford (1990:8) who sees strategy as "operations employed by the learner to aid the acquisition, storage, retrieval and use of information." Despite Oxford's definition of strategy being limited to learners only, I adopted the

term strategy ahead of others because I found that it had wider currency in my context. So, the strategies (ways by which learners acquire, store, retrieve and use knowledge) used by learners in the language and literacy learning process become paramount because even with the best teachers and methods, it is the learners who should do the learning.

There is a close relationship between strategies used to teach literacy, the literacy practices used in classes and the skills learners acquire as they use literacy to learn. Strategies that enhance literacy can be taught both explicitly and implicitly to aid learning. Such strategies are observable and someone can explain their own, self-designed strategy for problem solving to another person, and these strategies often find reflection through the literacy practices both teachers and learners employ to impart or acquire, use and store knowledge (literacy skills). That is, what teachers teach their learners gives the learners insight into their understanding of literacy and how they eventually use literacy in their everyday lives.

This chapter attempts to determine the literacy strategies that learners left grade 3 with and juxtaposes these with the literacy and academic demands of the intermediate phase in order to try to ascertain whether the learners were adequately prepared for what eventually happened in grade 4. The chapter analyses the transitional processes relating to the learning environment, learning resources and their appropriateness to learners' circumstances as well as the amount, process and frequency of reading and written work that learners were adapted to across the two phases. Data in this chapter was collected through classroom and lesson observation, interviews and documents.

7.2 The Environment and Resources

Because literacy is a situated social practice (Street, 2006; Perry, 2012; Paxton, 2006; Dixon, 2011; Barton and Hamilton, 2000) the classroom environment and its constituents comprise a significant aspect of the microsystem, and this has a direct impact on what goes on in the classroom. The environment, therefore, has the capacity to stimulate or stifle literacy learning as well as shape the atmosphere for different kinds of learning. The classroom environment can be both a literacy resource in itself and a reservoir of such materials. Thus, how the classroom is organized as an aspect of the microsystem has a bearing on the strategies taught and employed within it, the literacy practices experienced in that space (Dixon, 2011), and the skills learners eventually acquire. The view here is that there is a relationship between the organisation of knowledge in terms of time, space and text and its transmission (Bernstein, 1996; Dixon, 2011).

7.2.1 Environmental Print

Literature shows that there is a relationship between resource availability and reading competence (Griffiths, 2004; Gee, 2000; Chall, 1996; Reeves, et al, 2008; Ellis, 1994). The availability of reading resources (books, newspapers, novels, readers, informational texts, poems, short stories, etc), a mood and atmosphere for reading (making reading time special), a small library, and a culture of reading appear to be fundamental for all primary school classrooms. I use the phrase literacy rich classroom to refer to such environments that encourage reading.

Fig.7.1 Literacy rich classroom environments

In figure 7.1 above, a grade 3 teacher at Nellus is shown illustrating the task learners should do for the day while the classroom itself depicts a literacy rich environment which is a pre-requisite for foundation phase learning, with reading cards, artefacts, charts, books, displays of children's work and other materials. In this classroom a serious business-like, healthy working environment is created by the colourful, inviting, resource-filled learning environment and learners are encouraged to read the materials that are abundantly around them and that the teacher constantly changed. Learners are arguably more likely to read materials if those resources are made easily available (Taylor and Moyana, 2005), see the reasons to read and when there is constant demand by the teacher for learners to read. The literacy rich environment changed when learners moved to grade 4 where very few, if any, displays and accessible materials were available for reading.

Figure 7.2 overleaf shows a grade 4 classroom at Nellus. Grade 4 classroom walls were often bare, with neither charts nor reading cards on them. The picture to the left shows the back of the classroom with only the class timetable displayed on the wall. To the right the picture depicts the front part of the same classroom where samples of children's work were often displayed in grade 3 as acknowledgement of who they are and their work. A similar picture existed at Kolo primary

where classroom walls were print rich, colourful and inviting among grade 3s but also bare in grade 4.

Fig. 7.2 Literacy famished classroom environments

The differences in the state of environmental print in classrooms could be explained in three ways. The first explanation relates to the different ways the phases are organised. Unlike the foundation phase where the teacher stays in one classroom and teaches all subjects, organising and accounting for the material state of the classroom, intermediate and senior phase teachers at both Kolo and Nellus operated from staffrooms. Teachers do not have their own classrooms and tend to carry their teaching aids with them from class to class. This implies that there was no one accountable for the state of classrooms since no one had ownership of classrooms as teachers come and go as per the timetable. With communication among teachers being a problem in both schools, putting something like a chart in a shared space would have required some form of communication.

The administration's organization of classes and the attendant teaching practices where teachers go to classes to teach appeared to be a macro systemic decision as the school system in the Tshwane South district in general operates with rotational teaching in the intermediate phase

upwards. This is a systemic decision that takes resources into account. Often this is because there are more teachers in the school than the classrooms available. In the end the focus then is on learners being accommodated rather than teachers. The organisation of classes with a focus on learners rather than both teachers and learners meant that teachers' accountability for what goes on in the classroom had shifted from the order practiced in the foundation phase where every teacher has his/her classroom that they account for.

The second explanation is that the internal micro systemic effect of the displacement of print material from the walls was reflective of the difference in approaches to literacy between the two phases. There appeared to be a radical shift from concrete operational approaches (Wadsworth, 2004) where reading matter is physically available and observable, often accompanied by real objects/artefacts to which the reading materials referred. An example was a chart in the grade 3 classroom at Nellus in figure 7.1 above in which real samples of food crop seeds were stuck and labelled onto a chart. Children could read the word on the label and see the specific seed of the particular food crop. Thus, the seed and the word were read together to expand both word attack skills and vocabulary. There was a relationship between the here and now and the abstract concept of print.

The transition from literacy rich environments and practical reading aloud practices (Hoadley, 2012) with multimodal texts used in the foundation phase to bare classrooms can lead to a shock (Braund and Hames, 2005) if little or no effort is made to ensure that learners acclimatise (Cleave, Jowett and Bate, 1982: 195) in the new grade. The radical transition of the environmental print could impact negatively on learners' literacy. The shift meant a removal of the support system to mediate the decontextualized working with concepts and language. There was very little support in the print deprived classroom environments. Strategies that teachers can

use are limited in bare classrooms, resulting in them resorting to explaining concepts in the absence of the corresponding referent, object or supporting illustrations such as pictures, models and signs in grade 4 upwards. This observation may be read in the light of other studies (Reeves et al, 2008; Chick, 1996; Ensor, 2009) indicating that there was little reading in general going on in primary schools.

Bare classrooms also meant that reading content and meaning had become entirely displaced into printed text (Ensor, 2009) with very little else to mediate it, which then became a challenge for learners. Similarly, bare classroom environments in grade 4 meant the force factor, of a healthy environment, (Bronfenbrenner and Morris, 1998) of reading and literacy content had shifted from the immediate environment into nine different textbooks for each subject children had to learn. Put differently, reading content had been radically displaced in terms of space (Dixon, 2011) from the walls and hidden in textbooks without adequate support systems to acclimatise or scaffold learners towards this literacy transition. Thus, one literacy resource (environmental print) had been eliminated as children transitioned into grade 4.

The third explanation relates to the structuring and timetabling practices in the two schools that had a knock on effect in the environment. Because of the way the intermediate phase is organized, the timetable has shorter periods of 30 minutes per subject (often double periods are timetabled), which meant the teacher had limited time in any one classroom. The consequence of such limited time in any one class and the constant movement of teachers was that print and visuals disappeared with the teacher when they left the classroom, along with children's work. Taking print away from learners who do not necessarily experience print at home takes away a support, and for learners who are moving to English this makes the structural decision insensitive to language learning challenges learners had. The multimodal nature of wall displays and the

accompanying print acts as a support since the learners see both the word and the referent. Withdrawing wall print tended to limit opportunities and resources for English language learning where learners could see the language on walls, on the board and in text books. So, the bare classroom environment in grade 4 took away both opportunity and resource for literacy learning (Reeves et al, 2008) because of structural decisions outside both the exo, meso and the microsystems of the learners. This was also a consequence of the meso relations in which the foundation and intermediate phases did not communicate.

It could be argued, therefore, that psychologically the uninviting, print-deprived nature of the grade 4 learning environment tended to imply that things were more serious here, due to the withdrawal of the force factor. There were no visual supports here. The learner was on his/her own, and had to be an independent learner/reader. So, from an ecological point of view the microsystem of the grade 4 classroom appeared to infuse a sense of vacuity that learners transposed to other aspects of learning. The way the two schools were organized at a meso level in terms of the different teaching practices between the foundation and the intermediate phases on the one hand, and the organisation of time affects the ways in which literacy can be practiced. As such learners had to devise and adopt strategies to deal with this transition from reading in the environment and books (foundation) towards reading textbook and written work on the chalk board (intermediate) with minimal support.

7.2.2 Other Literacy Resources

Literacy development tends to suffer if it is not supported by adequate resources for reading and writing (Fisher and Ivey, 2005). Resources are the tools with which to access literacy, while the

act of reading and writing becomes the labour of learning to become literate. Such resources need to be appropriate for the level of the learners and adequate.

In chapter 3 I indicated that the two schools in this study did not have libraries in which to store books but had received donated readers from well-wishers or donors. The practice of creating, maintaining and using classroom-based reading corners was not in practice in the two schools. However, at Kolo there were library trolleys (2 per classroom) where teachers stored textbooks and readers, while at Nellus teachers stored their books in storerooms where only the teacher and class monitors were allowed access to the room. Similarly, the trolleys at Kolo could only be accessed by the teacher and the class monitor. The class monitor's business in both schools was largely that of packing back and taking out packs as instructed by the teachers. This means that readers in both schools were kept by teachers and only released when teachers intended to use them.

This practice was meant to ensure books are kept safe from those learners who could damage them through theft, mishandling and other forms of recklessness. As a result the way textbooks and readers were kept (Taylor and Moyana, 2005; Reeves et al, 2008; Probyn, 2009) had a bearing on the strategies used by both teachers and learners (Brock-Utne and Holmarscottir, 2004) in utilizing them for literacy learning. The effect was that literacy resources became regulated and controlled, diminishing learning.

Under the guise of safe-keeping, the storerooms and library trolleys were restricted areas for learners. The use of textbooks and readers in these 'storage' spaces became restricted for classroom use as per the teacher's choice. Most of the literacy materials stayed neatly packed in lockers and remained there. Learners reported during interviews (also confirmed by observation)

that they were not allowed to access these storerooms and trolleys freely and take readers and textbooks home to read. Since there were no reading facilities such as libraries or reading corners, this practice was counterproductive to literacy. The value of books lies in their use rather than their storage. As such, class readers received by Kolo School a couple of years back still looked new. If learners cannot access reading materials freely, reading for pleasure suffers and the substance of reading (Chick, 1996) gets lost. The impression created by such practices is that reading is a practice for specific timetabled periods and under the watchful eyes of the teacher or class monitor instead of reading being a routine practice for pleasure and enjoyment. So, the way the resources were managed and utilized impacted negatively on literacy learning. As a literacy practice the tendency to keep books away from learners under the guise of safe-keeping limited access, and hence opportunities for literacy learning (Taylor and Moyana, 2005; Reeves et al, 2008).

The class teachers' inventories of literacy resources of the two schools at grade 3 showed that the two schools had readers and textbooks largely for English (3 readers and 2 textbooks per child at Nellus and about 9 readers and 1 textbook per child at Kolo), IsiZulu (5 readers per learner at Kolo), Sepedi (5 readers per learner at Kolo), Afrikaans (none at Nellus despite this being the FAL) and Mathematics (1 textbook per child per school). The English subject had the lion's share of readers with the bulk at Kolo. Unlike other home language subjects isiZulu and Sepedi, there were neither textbooks nor class readers in Afrikaans at Nellus.

Because of the rotational system, in which different teachers come and offer different subjects to learners in specific timetabled periods in the intermediate phase, grade 4 subject textbooks were kept by subject teachers who brought them to class and took them away on conclusion of their lessons. Even then the other subjects, namely Natural Science, Social Science, Economic and

Management Sciences, Life Orientation, Technology and Arts and Craft, had no children's resource books in both schools and only depended on a teacher's copy of the learners' resource book. The issue of textbooks and learning resources is a tired problem in South African education (Jansen, 2005; Dixon, 2007; Reeves et al, 2008; Probyn, 2009; Taylor, 2012; *Pretoria News*, June 27, 2012), and particularly in the basic education sector.

The figures of textbooks above reflect that every child could have had at least one reader in English and, particularly at Kolo, another in any one of the African languages (isiZulu and Sepedi) at any one time for independent reading either at home or in school in grade 3. However, the resource management practices in these classes prohibited any learner from having a reader in their possession at any time of their choice or to carry it home for reading. Teachers were keen to keep the books rather than risk their numbers or state through allowing learners free access to the books and readers. Instead of modelling (Reeves et al, 2008) how learners should treat, handle and care for books, teachers resorted to keeping the resources away from their intended beneficiaries, thereby rendering their availability rather meaningless as literacy learning resources. The withdrawal of resources was not good for transition.

7.2.3 Approaches to Teaching Reading

I also sought to establish how the available textbooks and readers were used, in those instances where such use was invoked. Such use speaks to the strategies teachers used in maximizing the resources at their disposal. In the fourth term of grade 3 Kolo introduced English through the use of graded readers. Introducing a subject at grade 3 through readers brings into question the issue of strategy. The quantities of English readers above clearly show that the use of readers, in the limited time that was left in grade 3 before transitioning to English as medium of instruction in

grade 4, could hardly remedy the discrepancies or inadequacies that learners faced in terms of their grade knowledge level in English.

Grade 3 classes at both Kolo and Nellus began each morning with a 30 minutes reading period during which readers were brought out of trolleys for self-study. While most of the learners could hardly read English at this time, this was compounded by the timing of the reading lessons. This first period of the day was often disturbed by preparatory activities such as cleaning up, re-arrangements, register taking, staff visits to the administration block, general preparatory meetings, late coming and other encumbrances. Thus, the period was hardly well utilised. Since most of the learners had challenges with speaking, reading, writing and understanding English, and in the light of the quantities I stated above, this period could have been better used for real, individualised (Hoadley, 2008) and guided learner interaction with text.

From an ecological perspective the issue of time (Ensor, 2009; Dixon, 2010; Chisholm et al, 2005) and timing (Hoadley, 2008) is critical in educational planning. Beginning a school day with reading tends to set literacy as the most important aspect of learning. However, the disturbances associated with this period diminished the focus as the period was hardly well utilized. This speaks to the ways in which practices in the mesosystem undermined the importance of reading. During this period learners were often either left to read alone or when reading did take place it was disturbed by preparation for the day. In these circumstances then, the drop-everything-and-read principle that was supposed to be in place in these schools did not suffice.

At Nellus this practice was stronger but the resources were problematic. The readers used by the learners during the morning reading period were often used again during the regular English

language lessons. The readers available for such lessons were the *TreeTops* series, namely 'Jungle shorts', 'The Beehive Scheme 5', 'Mr Stofflees and the painted Tiger', 'Bertha's secret battle', and a few others that were ideal for guided reading but whose limited quantities rendered them unusable for whole-class reading. These were readers at stage 10 and meant for English LOLT learners, which meant the school was skipping other stages in order to achieve transitional readiness in the shortest possible time. Of all the readers in the classes none had African characters and an African setting.

The choice of reading materials is a serious issue in literacy studies as it tends to project what those who choose believe as constituting valid knowledge and beliefs. As such, any choice should involve consideration of the sociocultural factors of the recipient readership as I have alluded to here. Fairclough (1989), Luke (2012; 1995) and others call for an interpretation of the social processes that give rise to the production of the text as well as of the social historical conditions within which participants are situated. The combinatorial effect of inappropriate settings in texts and inappropriate level of difficulty renders transition difficult and learning hard for learners in these circumstances. The learner ends up unable to locate themselves in what they read. From a critical literacy point of view such literacy learning is disempowering.

At Kolo, and to a limited extent Nellus, the typological proximity (linguistic distance) of English and the African languages rendered it difficult for learners to transfer any literacy skills from one language to the other. In chapter 6 I argued that there is barely a relationship between English and both isiZulu and Sepedi in terms of sentence structure, phonetic systems and semantic systems and hence the linguistic distance between these languages renders them non-cognate. Literature informs us that the closer languages are to one another the easier it generally is for students to transfer their understanding of literacy, learning and communication from one

language to another (Makalela, 2015; Hornberger, 2004; Aronin and O'Laoire, 2004). As a result of learners' difficulties with English, grade 4 teachers at Kolo were left with no option but to read from textbooks to learners then translate whole passages to either isiZulu or Sepedi. For these classes it became unnecessary to check if they had knowledge of high frequency words as it was very clear they did not. As such, there was greater need for teaching reading and capitalisation on reading (Fisher and Ivey, 2005) at Kolo, by creating conditions to encourage reading across genres and subjects.

The micro and macro systems at Kolo, in relation to their approaches to literacy, appeared to inadequately prepare learners for the literacy demands of grade 4. While the same readers were available at Nellus, the learners there exhibited better developed reading skills and could deal with the readers on their own for leisure reading and simple practice since they had approached the curriculum through English from grade 1.

What emerges in the two schools is that the resources for reading and literacy were not only inadequate but also how they were used can be seen as problematic since they were not readily accessible to learners. Also clear from the above description is the fact that the schools' choices of reading resources for use in teaching and learning were not culturally appropriate for these learners who were additional language learners. In the case of Kolo the learners appeared not adequately equipped with the basic knowledge of English to actually benefit from these resources. Given the unavailability of resource materials in other subjects, the microsystem of the grade 4 classroom rendered access to concepts difficult for the learners across the curriculum.

7.2.4 Textbook Analysis

This section looks at the appropriateness or suitability of the literacy resources, specifically textbooks, used by the two schools to teach particularly English literacy. I analysed English language textbooks for grade 3 because learners in both schools accessed the curriculum in English from grade 4 onwards despite following different trajectories in their preparation for the intermediate phase. I do this analysis because of a relationship I perceive between the organisation of knowledge (content) and its transmission. Generally speaking, people design operational strategies in relation to the circumstances confronting them. Strategies used by teachers to teach subject matter should relate to the nature of the content itself while also considering the prior knowledge and abilities of the learners upon which such content will be founded. Similarly, the strategies employed by learners have to relate to the nature and level of difficulty of the tasks and content being learnt (Douglas, 2009). Furthermore, if textbooks are inappropriate, their content difficult and the quantities limited then the combinatorial effect of this could impinge on both teacher and pupil strategies for teaching and acquiring of literacy.

I analysed the textbook "*Viva English: Resource and Reading book grade 3*" by Beck and Carter, (2008). This textbook was available at both Kolo and Nellus and is meant for home language English learners. The passages were long, the vocabulary quite demanding (deep) and complex, and had quite challenging punctuation as well as the use of compound word forms such as 'sleep-easy', 'cheep-cheep', 'brussel-sprouts' and so forth. These passages were quite difficult for the majority of learners although some children at Nellus could manage with reasonable levels of competence as a result of their wider ranging exposure to English since grade 1. For learners at Kolo this textbook was quite difficult, yet it was the main learners' resource book available.

The graphics in the textbook appeared to relate to much older learners as no young boys and girls of grade 3 ages were depicted. Although the book was clearly labelled as a grade 3 text, it was not aligned to the literacy levels of FAL speakers or learners it targeted. In schools where the school meso and microsystems ensure adequate preparation of first language learners' literacy and language skills, this text book would probably be appropriate. In the first three passages of the textbook I isolated the following words which I felt were used with some degree of complexity:

Farmyard	stroke	fluffy	excitedly	whispering	wonder
crossly	cauliflower	eggshells	cheep-cheep	centimetres	suddenly
heavier	absolutely	goodness	butterfly	peel mash	tinier
whether	difference	quietly	boasted	weigh	cupboard
patient	shyly	roasted			

Much as these words are easy enough for the age range and grade level in question as determined by Fry's (1977) readability calculation/graph, the children had difficulty in both reading them (decoding) and understanding their meanings. Learners perceived as fluent readers would attempt them as much as four times before getting them right in some cases. Some of the words appeared comprehensible in their listening vocabulary (such as heavier, cupboard and roasted) and could be understood when read to them by the teacher with appropriate articulation and pronunciation. However, when asked to read a passage where the same words were used, observation data revealed that it was difficult for most of the learners in both schools to decode them with reasonable accuracy. One then understands why teachers at this school opted for readers rather than textbooks.

I also analysed the textbook, '*English for the New Nation: Rainbow Literacy Series (reader 3)*' by Opie-Jacobs, Ngambu, Ngambu, Weakley, Waker and Swart (2009) published by Shumani

Printers in Cape Town. This textbook was selected because it was the core textbook used at Nellus during the data collection phase for the first dataset. The book was rich in vocabulary and exercises that enrich the children's language experiences and learning. Authors made an effort to include comprehension passages that accommodate learners in rural, farming, mining and urban settings.

Some of the frequently occurring (high frequency) words in this textbook appeared to be challenging to the learners. In the attempt to balance cultural diversity of its target market, the text delves into cultural aspects that appeared unfamiliar to the learners at Nellus. I isolated the following list of words from the textbook to clarify this point:

Swim-suit	sandwiches	waiting-room	sandcastle	sea-side	water-hole	polar-bear
handrail	silkworm	the golden rule	squash	spooky-shadow	milk tank	syllable
unjumble	sequencing	consonants	phonic	picnic spot		

While these words are likely to be suitable for the average grade 3 English LOLT learner, the words appeared not accustomed to the sociocultural experiences of the learners at Nellus. In the South African context the word costume is more popular among those who live near beaches and in areas where swimming pools are found. There are no polar bears in Africa as a whole. We go to parks rather than picnic spots. For these learners water comes from taps, not waterholes just as milk is bought from the supermarket, not a milk tank. The same appears for 'silkworm', 'golden rule' and 'spooky-shadow'. The majority of learners at Nellus had difficulties in decoding and comprehending these words as they appeared difficult in some cases and culturally irrelevant to their lives. While they had learnt the alphabetic principle and word building, they had not learnt

them through technical jargon (consonant, phonic, syllable) as the textbook appeared to presuppose. This appeared to bring confusion to the learners as the content to be learnt became inaccessible. Words they thought they were familiar with appeared to surprise them each time they began to mean something else, yet teachers appeared to take such learning for granted. Understanding that words could have the same spelling but different meanings (homonymy) was a bit too far-fetched for these assumed home language English learners. Among some of the words in this textbook that appeared capable of confusing learners were the following:

table	strike	patient	good/goods	honey	thought
tracks	lift	ground	trick	park	tick
scatter	bumps	stream			

Learners at Nellus came across all these words in the grade 4 curriculum but their meanings had changed from the meanings they had in grade 3. The word 'table' that meant a piece of furniture in grade 3 now meant a graphic presentation of numbers in mathematics in grade 4 while the word 'good' they struggled to earn from the teacher as praise for quality work suddenly meant substances of trade in Economic and Management Sciences. Likewise the tick that the teacher used to indicate correct work suddenly meant a parasite in the social sciences and the sound of the clock in Maths, with the same subjects changing the word 'patient' to now mean a person in hospital. The level of language usage and literacy skills appeared to change radically in grade 4 when the vocabulary widened, usage deepened and application rather than rote knowledge became mandatory.

The variables in language complexity required of the learners called for well-grounded experiences and literacy built from sound tuition from grade 1 to 3. As such, homophones and

homonyms became complex for the learners, calling for language and literacy skills that grade 3 had not equipped the learners with. Yet this mastery was required of the learners at grade 4 level. As is evident in the lesson descriptions later in this chapter, grade 3 teachers did not construe such literacy levels as required from their learners and rather concentrated on basic, easy fill-in and memory based elements of the literacy curriculum. As such, the literacy proficiency of the learners and the strategies used by grade 3 teachers in their preparation for grade 4 appeared to have a bearing on the strategies both learners and teachers used to tackle the content and tasks that the curriculum set for them later in grade 4.

The ecological factors in the two schools rendered transition to the intermediate phase difficult. For learners at Kolo, grade 4 ushered a new phase in their learning where most of the curriculum and its packaging was new to them, demanding literacy skills they did not have as well as an English language proficiency grade 3 had not equipped them with. For those at Nellus the resources through which they had prepared for grade 4 appeared to have under-equipped them with literacies that did not match the demands of grade 4. When an inappropriate sociocultural context is coupled with inappropriate level of difficulty in textbooks, these factors make textbooks hard to both read and learn through for the learners. The point here is that there was probably very little, if anything, wrong with the textbooks learners used but there was everything to question in the appropriateness of those textbooks in this context. The texts are designed with specific focus on syllabi of the grade, and not specific learners. The result was a mismatch between the resource available and the language and literacy skills level that learners brought with them. The language and literacy proficiency levels that grade 4 demanded of them through the nine subjects was higher.

With many factors against both sets of learners, ranging from environmental, social, academic and material as well as curricular conditions, learners were bound to find transition challenging. On reaching grade 4 both learners were united by the use of English as the medium of instruction.

7.3 Grade 4 English literacy demands

Some authors (Seligmann, 2012; DBE, 2011a-f; Reeves, 2008) express an eclectic view to language teaching that supports methods and teaching strategies which enhance the concurrent development of the five components of reading indicated in chapter 5. If there are discrepancies between the literacy demands of the grade 4 curriculum and the literacy skills learners have, the result would have a bearing on the strategies teachers employ to teach the curriculum in grade 4.

Table 7.1 below summarizes the grade 4 CAPS English FAL content as stipulated in the curriculum statement and the attendant skills and strategies learners were expected to master, thereby proffering strategies children were also expected to employ in learning the subject content. From the content of the English FAL subject at grade 4, it is clear that learners were required to have, among other skills, sound understanding of grammar in verbs, nouns, adjectives, adverbs, pronouns and tenses which this subject extended further. The grade 4 CAPS curriculum that learners met in the class of 2012 did not take into consideration that these learners had followed an NCS curriculum up to grade 3 and hence did not have what the curriculum presupposed they had. After only three months of extensive English learning the learners at Kolo found it tough to grapple with the curriculum, which was now delivered entirely in English in grade 4 for both schools.

Table 7.1 Overview of grade 4 CAPS content, skills and strategies

Skill	Content	Strategies and sub-skills
Listening and speaking	-Comprehension -Oral communication – conversations, directions and instructions, story-telling, role play, group discussions, games etc.	Listening comprehension and speaking • Making notes, lists, summaries, expressing opinions, asking questions • Recall specific details; reflect on values, biases, stereotyping, discussing characters, story line and setting. Communicating for social purposes • Initiating and sustaining conversations • Sharing ideas and experiences • Encouraging use of the additional language Prepared and unprepared short talks • Research, organise materials coherently, choose and develop main ideas and supporting ideas with examples • Correct formatting, vocabulary, language and conventions • Tone of voice, voice projection, pace, eye contact, posture and gesture • Introducing and concluding, using audio-visual aids
Reading and viewing	-Reading stories, plays, poetry, informational texts, social texts, media texts, visual literacy -Close reading of texts, extended reading of texts -Prepared and unprepared reading aloud	• Use of pre-reading, reading and post-reading strategies • Text features: titles, illustrations, graphs, charts, captions, headings, format etc. • Text structure: main point and supporting points, sequence, description, narration, etc. • Parts of a book: title, table of contents, chapters, glossary etc. • Reading and viewing strategies: skimming, scanning, inferring, re-reading, summarising, drawing conclusions, etc. • Visual literacy: persuasive techniques, impact of use of layout and design features • Poetry: literal and figurative meaning, theme and message, imagery, sound devices (stanza, rhyme, rhythm, alliteration, assonance and consonance, onomatopoeia). • Key features of texts (characters, story line, structure and format etc.) • Information and social media texts • Prepared and unprepared reading aloud
Writing and presenting	-Word, sentence and paragraph writing -Creative writing: descriptive, narrative, imaginative, dialogues and short play scripts. -Transactional writing: notes, procedural texts, factual recounts, information texts, visual literacy	Process writing • Planning, drafting, revising, editing, proof reading and presenting. Pre-writing/planning • Consider target audience and purpose, consider type of writing, using mind maps, organising ideas Drafting • Word choice, structuring sentences, main and supporting ideas, specific features of the required text • Writing critically, seeking feedback Revising, editing, proofreading and presenting • Revising, refining word choice, sentence or paragraph structures • Editing for spelling, grammar, punctuation • Presenting neat, legible final work

Language structures and convention	Nouns, determiners, pronouns, adjectives, verbs, tenses, modals, adverbs, prepositions, conjunctions, Sentence structure, punctuation, vocabulary development Spelling and spelling rules	Using different word forms to construct own sentences Understand language rules and grammar

Adapted from the DBE (2011b).

Confronted with learners who had little knowledge of English, grade 4 teachers resorted to teaching strategies that sought to contain the situation they faced. English teachers resorted to the basics of decoding English and did not find time for 'advanced' concepts with learners who had not yet mastered basic skills such as phonemic awareness, word attack, simple spelling or reading with accuracy and fluency in English. In such situations vocabulary and comprehension become less important than phonemic awareness, fluency, decoding and spelling. Learners' literacy skills did not appear developed to the level where they could distinguish sounds with reasonable confidence because they also lacked the vocabulary from which to isolate and apply these sounds. A rich vocabulary base appeared prerequisite to such literacy skills. The discrepancies in children's literacy competences could be traced back to the quality of tuition (Hoadley, 2012; Spaull, 2013) across both foundation and intermediate grades that appeared to lack in both strategy and content mastery. The next section explores the relationship between teaching strategies and the competences learners eventually had and how that left them prepared or under-prepared for transition.

7.3.1 Teaching English Literacy

In chapters 5 and 6 I alluded to the fact that there was no explicit instruction, preparation or programme at the mesosystemic level to help learners deal with transition from foundation to

intermediate phases. The silence of transition in ways the two schools prepared/planned their programmes required an examination of the salient strategies embedded in the interactions between teachers and learners. As such, it became imperative to examine the (implicit) pedagogies used by teachers in terms of how these supported learners in both preparing for, and dealing with, transition. Such strategies would reveal the gaps, if any, the ruptures and convergences in learners' every day experiences with the curriculum. This way of working with the data speaks to one of the key foci of the research questions that sought to understand the strategies used by both teachers and learners in dealing with transition.

In order to understand the teachers' strategies I observed a total of 112 lessons. Of these, 41 were observed in grade 3 (19 and 22 at Nellus and Kolo respectively) between October and December 2011, while 71 lessons were observed in grade 4 (39 and 32 respectively) between January and June 2012. I disregarded the first three weeks' lessons for grade 4 in January and early February to minimize the Hawthorn effect (McCarney et.al, 2007) on teachers. However, the period was integral in understanding learner behaviours. In order to aid their teaching, pre-prepared lesson plans from the Gauteng Primary Literacy and Mathematics Strategy (GPLMS) were often used by teachers in both schools as required by the district education office (which illustrates the significant influence of the exosystem).

In spite of other factors that influence choice of strategies, what emerges from the data on the two schools was that reading aloud (vocalizing the text to oneself) and chorusing (a form of communal reading in which the whole class shouts (Pretorius, 2014) out a word, sentence or other piece of text) as well as teacher demonstration were the most prevalent strategies employed by teachers in the foundation phase in teaching comprehension, fluency, vocabulary and grammar (see appendix K). Reading aloud and chorusing found reflection in 82% of all grade 3

reading lessons observed at Nellus while a rate of 88% was recorded at Kolo in both classes. The remaining percentages were distributed among shared reading (approximately 3%), independent reading (approximately 3%), group reading (2%), discussions (4%) and demonstrations (8%).

 Commenting after learners started vocalising during a provincial exemplar ANA paper on the 10th November 2011, Ms Bati asserted that "learners are not used to silent reading… learners would pass better an oral test than a written one." What comes out of Ms Bati's observation is a significant finding of this study. While these emergent readers (Wolf, 2007) learnt every day and are used to reading aloud to themselves, the ANAs and other tests demanded that children use an unfamiliar practice of reading silently to themselves. This had the effect of demanding a literacy practice different from their everyday practices. Such a shift would naturally have a negative effect on learner's performance. Also, literature (Wolf, 2007) informs us that vocalisation impedes comprehension. This finding could, in part, explain the low pass rates of the two schools in the ANAs of 2010. Also, grade 4 demanded different literacy practices as I illustrate later in this section.

The dominant strategies of literacy learning would soon shift to independent silent reading in grade 4 onwards in line with the demands of CAPS (DBE, 2011d). As I indicated earlier in this chapter, such change coincided with an increase in the semantic density (Ensor et al, 2009) in texts which imposed higher cognitive demand (Ensor et al, 2009; Hoadley, 2009; Adler et al, 2002) on learners. These changes in pedagogy thus called for significant adjustment on the learner. Similarly, while classroom observation data showed that the foundation phase teachers in both schools emphasized the learners pointing with their fingers at the sections they read at all times (K1, 18.11.2011 English lesson and N1, 22.11.2011 English), grade 4 discouraged that practice (K4, 11.03.2012 Social Science and N4, 06.03.2012 English), again calling for another

transition within the transition. Demanding that learners point with their fingers during reading at grade 3 also illustrates the use of novice reader strategies on learners who were supposed to be at the interface of emergent reading and fluency (Wolf, 2006). While this strategy was a good start, it had its limits because it points to teachers who lacked knowledge about the relationships between comprehension, fluency and accuracy. These inconsistences in the way the two phases constructed literacy appeared to confuse the learners (see chapter 8) and thus rendered transition to be challenging, especially in the absence of other support systems.

The differences in the way the two schools taught the foundation phase curriculum to learners became more pronounced at the time Kolo began to offer English language seriously in September 2011. This period coincided with the transition to the use of ball-point pens for writing and significantly affected handwriting, penmanship and its teaching. While the curriculum specifies that learners should be transitioning to cursive print at this time, with 15 minutes set aside in the foundation phase for teaching handwriting every day, teachers found themselves preoccupied with the technicalities of using the new writing instruments (pen handling skills, left-to-right orientation skills, pen-to-paper attrition (pressing) skills, book handling/positioning skills, letter shaping, spacing, looping, basic punctuation skills (DBE, 2010) and many other such basics) and could not use the handwriting time for the purpose for which it was timetabled. Documentary evidence in both children's work (Kamogelo's work on 11.04.2012, see page 286 and Boikantso's work on 13.02.2012 on page 280) and lesson observation showed that handwriting was largely neglected in both schools. As such, only one lesson on teaching handwriting explicitly (which is here construed as a practice and not a strategy) was observed at Nellus on November 1, 2011 over the period of data collection for this

study. No handwriting lesson was observed at Kolo and there was no evidence in learners' exercise books of handwriting lessons on days when the researcher was outside of these classes.

The case of handwriting and penmanship exposes the discrepancy between what curriculum documents say and their practical implementation in the classroom. In the light of teachers' negative attitudes towards cursive writing, and the view that new teachers had not been trained to teach cursive (DVT A012 on 07.12.2011 and DVT A028 on 25.05.2012), all coupled within a period of flux, the ability to read situations and adapt to their demands became critical skills in the two schools. Methods and strategies did not appear to respond to the situation on the ground (In chapter 8 I address further the case of low frequency and poor quality of writing versus handwriting from the learners' perspective).

Because the learners found literacy in English both new, and difficult in the case of Kolo, grade 3 teachers in both schools focused more on basic skills such as phonics, word attack skills, vocabulary and grammar at the expense of comprehension and fluency on the one hand, and one-word answers at the expense of expository/generative writing on the other, while also reclining to translation (a form of code switching in which the teacher repeats in vernacular a sentence initially made in English) to local languages. Table 7.2 below shows the frequencies of lessons in each literacy area per school. I also illustrate the cases of fluency, vocabulary and grammar in exemplar lessons in the succeeding section.

The consequence of the flux was illustrated in the shift that occurred when learners moved to the intermediate phase in grade 4. Data in this study shows that the strategies shifted from reading aloud and chorusing to independent silent reading and homework, with less support for learning in terms of charts, pictures and literacy reading materials. Also, there was a significant shift from

emphasis on grammar (from 41% of lessons in grade 3 to 20% in grade 4) to reading for comprehension (20% up to about 50%) in grade 4. Vocabulary that was taught rigidly through dictionary meanings and direct word meanings in grade 3 at Nellus shifted to a subject specific register in grade 4, with the meaning of words being taught in context (fluid meanings) with less dependence on dictionaries and rigid meanings.

Reading was taught as a set of composite skills rather than discrete units of knowledge. One had to read fluently and accurately while also attending to comprehensional aspects of the text. Lessons were composed of multiple skills rather than isolated skills. An example was an Art and Culture lesson taught at Nellus on March 9, 2012 in which learners were expected to first read a passage, and then draw diagrams before answering comprehension questions. As such the greater focus in grade 4 shifted to comprehension that required fluency, vocabulary, sound grammar knowledge and other insipient skills that honed the learner into the answering of open ended questions.

Table 7.2 overleaf shows that critical skills such as cursive writing and expressive writing (generative tasks) had not been introduced to learners in both schools, save for the one lesson on explicit teaching of handwriting observed at Nellus. This had the consequence of affecting the quality of learners' handwriting at grade 4. Also, it affected the quality of instruction in grade 4 as learners found it challenging to write more expository texts in the form of notes, composition writing and open-ended questions that grade 4 demanded of them. The result of this anomaly was lower performance rates and transitional problems for learners. In this section I trace the discrepancies in grade 3 to 4 transition in the pedagogies across the two phases in as far as teaching of grammar, vocabulary and comprehension (read fluency) are concerned.

Table 7.2 Comparison of literacy teaching strategies between Schools

Theme	NELLUS	KOLO
Grade 3 reading (all skills)	Emphasis on reading for fluency and comprehension with pronounced emphasis on reading speed, observing punctuation and intonation. Passages read at least 3 times before discussions and other activities are engaged on. Such readings reinforced with picture discussions, explanations, translation and illustrations. Finger pointing emphasized when reading.	The greater emphasis here remained on vocabulary, word attack and phonics. Passages read and later translated to vernacular before discussions, teacher expositions and other activities. Support for reading in the form of pictures, illustrations and other visuals to enhance comprehension. Finger pointing strictly emphasized here to the extent of demanding a learner to hold the book with the right hand while finger pointing with the left. Reading skills often integrated in lessons.
Vocabulary	Vocabulary/new words integrated with teaching of other skills such as fluency and comprehension. Vocabulary taught independent of context, often with the use of dictionaries. Regulated tendency to translate to vernacular languages.	Vocabulary/new words written on word cards and their meanings taught directly to the learner, independent of context. Dictionaries not in use. Words translated to local languages.
Writing (to include handwriting)	Handwriting neglected as only one lesson on handwriting was observed out of the 19 lessons seen in the school. Frequency of writing quite poor probably due to teacher-learner ratios. Quality not quite up to standard. See samples. Generally fill-ins, choose, complete and other low order, non-generative writing – probably meant to make marking easier for the teacher. Cursive hardly taught as of the end of grade 3.	Handwriting neglected here as not a single lesson was observed out of the 22 lessons observed. As a consequence, learners' handwriting is generally poor in the grade 3 classes. Frequency of writing is rather low as learners only wrote about two exercises per day rather than 4 as per the curriculum requirements. Quality of written work in learners' exercise books below the expectations of the grade. Tasks given to learners for writing largely non-generative in which learners filled in, one-word answers, etc. No introduction of cursive writing as of the end of 2011.
Grammar	Very high frequency in lessons taught in this school, 6 out of 19 lessons being grammar lessons. Grammar rules are hardly explained as often learners are just told the correct answer without justification.	9 out of 22 lessons involved grammar (obsession with grammar). Grade 3 teachers had their own challenges with English grammar prior to teaching it to kids.
Resources	Textbooks (*English for the New Nation*, and *Viva English: Resource and Reading Book Grade 3*); reading cards, charts, readers etc.	Textbook *English for the New Nation*, readers, charts, reading cards etc.
Predominant strategies	Reading aloud (approximately 80% of all lessons that involved reading involved children reading aloud and chorusing), shared reading (15%) and independent guided reading (5%).	Predominantly reading aloud (at least 90% of lessons that involved aspects of reading involved reading aloud and chorusing) and shared reading (10%). This could be attributed to large sections of the learners who could hardly read with reasonable fluency, speed and comprehension.

Table 7.2 summarizes some of the major issues and differences between Kolo and Nellus School in relation to some specific areas of literacy. The table also shows a close relationship in the ways the two schools constructed literacy as most of the practices were common in both schools. Clear distinctions appeared in areas such as writing (to include handwriting), resource availability and usage, as well as the teaching of vocabulary.

7.3.2 The English Grammar Lesson

In order to illustrate the general nature of teaching and learning in the two schools I isolated four lessons in teaching grammar, vocabulary, fluency and comprehension that are typical of the lessons observed, the teaching and learning strategies used as well as some of the preparation for transition teachers employed. First, I present below an account of an English lesson delivered by Ms Morena, a grade 3 teacher at Kolo on November 10, 2011. I made the deliberate choice to focus more on (though not limited to) language lessons because of their close relationship with literacy practices as well as the fact that languages impact the delivery and understanding of concepts across the curriculum.

> *Ms Morena asks all learners to stand up and sing the song "If you're happy and you know it." At the end of this song a learner, on her own accord, begins another isiZulu song and the class joins in unison. A sense of high morale is generated instantly before the learners are asked to take their seats. Ms Morena posts the reading chart below (next page) on the chalkboard.*
>
> *Ms Morena then writes the topic "Future Tense: Tomorrow or Later" on the board and immediately asks learners to construct sentences on the pictures they see on the chart. Three sentences are given by learners; 'Grandmother and the girl are talking,' 'The*

woman and man are waiting for their money', and 'The mother shouts at her daughter'.

The teacher writes these sentences on the board. The teacher then explains the future

tense, the past tense and what she called the progressive.

In her explanation Ms Morena uses the sentence 'the man <u>paid</u> for his fruits' and

*underlines the verb 'paid' to emphasize that the **verb** [stress mine] is in the past. She then*

immediately moves to the future tense which she explains as 'something that is going to

happen tomorrow or later.' Using her GPLMS designed lesson plan which she

periodically consults, she draws the following table as the children sit quietly:

Present Tense	Future Tense
1. The man choose<u>s</u> the fruits.	1. Tomorrow the man will choose the fruits.
2. The man get<u>s</u> money from the machine.	2. The man will get money from the machine.
3. The mother shout<u>s</u> at her daughter.	3. The mother will shout at the daughter.
4. The man pay<u>s</u> for his shopping.	4. The man will pay for his shopping.
5. Granny and the girl talk.	5. Granny and the girl will talk.

Having completed writing, the teacher holds her lesson plan in her left hand and asks the

class to read in chorus the sentences in both columns after her, then proceeds to explain

the addition of 'will' and the change of verbs that drop the –s in the future tense. She

continues to explain the position of 'will' in the future tense sentences. The lesson then

shifts to the learners. They are asked to construct their own sentences in the future tense.

One learner tries and says, "Mother is robbing the father", and "the woman and the man

are waiting for their money." Several other unsuccessful attempts are made before children are asked to copy the 5 future tense sentences in their exercise books.

This literacy event typifies the general nature of language lessons in grade 3 between the two schools and helps to accentuate several issues about strategies teachers used in shaping their teaching practices in the classroom. Guided by GPLMS designed plans, teachers taught verbs, adverbs, adjectives, pronouns, conjunctions and rhymes in a definitive and descriptive way. As such it was often difficult to pinpoint the actual strategies the teachers were using and the implicit strategies learners were expected to apply to master the content in their lessons.

Ms Morena's lesson reflects the influence of vernacular languages on English language learning. Immediately after an English song the learner elects to begin an isiZulu song, as if to fall back to some comfort zone. Given that this class had learnt literacy in isiZulu before moving on to English two months before the time of this lesson, it is logical to think that the learner who began the isiZulu song was only moving to a space of linguistic comfort (even the morale heightened) rather than making an overt protest. The influence of isiZulu in this class can also be surmised through the answers learners later gave to the teacher's questions that reflected literal translation. 'Mother is robbing the father' appears to be direct translation from Kasitaal, *wamrobha* (which means cheating) although this was also difficult to relate to the chart on which the lesson was based. The same may be said of the sentence, 'the woman and the man are waiting for their money' instead of, 'the *man* and *woman* are in a *queue'*. Interesting to note was the fact that the teacher still wrote these sentences on the chalkboard, probably to motivate the learners who had constructed them.

Figure 7.3 English literacy teaching chart

The teacher used a chart to begin her lesson. The use of such visuals as support for learning is also extended by a table that the teacher drew on the chalkboard later in this lesson. As a technique the use of visuals makes learning easier for learners as there were multiple uses of senses. The visuals became integral support for teachers too as these made explanations easier and more focused than mere talk. It is important to note, however, that this chart was supplied by the GPLMS freely to schools in the province for such lessons. Such support for learning was absent from the learning space when learners moved to grade 4 since such support was generally not provided as discussed earlier in this chapter.

As shown in the lesson above, there was very little room for compositional/creative practice as dictated by the curriculum (see strategies and sub skill under the language structures row in table 7.1) but rather mere consumptive, rote and descriptive learning of what was 'there' in the lesson plan without adequate opening up for learners to explore with language. Implicitly, this meant the learner was supposed to know what was given and memorize it rather than see patterns and rules to liberate him/her to understand as well as construct fresh, new and unrehearsed or unheard sentences to mean whatever he/she may want. The matter rests in the learners practising what has been learnt, to reflect comprehension of concepts. Put differently, it's what the learners master rather than what the teacher does or says. This becomes a constraint of the lesson plan which is crafted in the exosystem for application in the microsystem, without due regard for the specific circumstances and consideration of the specific recipients. When teachers have no control over what and how they teach, the support can become a hindrance or limiting factor.

Some strategies were externally prescribed and rather generic. Teachers informed me through interviews that they were not allowed to be flexible and deviate from the prescriptions in the lesson plan, although they still did. Based on the lesson described above, some of these

deviations were not pedagogically sound. While the generic lesson plan dramatically improved the quality of the lesson by focusing the description, pacing of the lesson, improved content knowledge and quality of the points of explication, for learners at Kolo who did not have adequate vocabulary, this lesson was difficult and hence the failure by learners to construct any one correct sentence in the application stage of the lesson. And, instead of enabling learners to construct five sentences on what they were planning to do the next day as the plan suggested, the teacher went for the easier route of letting learners copy the sentences into their books. Merely copying things from the board did not appear to provide adequate literacy practice for learners, yet the teacher's strategy was probably a reaction to her present situation of learners who did not have an adequate language base upon which to confront such an open task as constructing own sentences.

I had expected to see the teacher's strong emphasis that the future tense implies 'tomorrow', and that whatever the sentences meant would still not have happened at the time but rather 'will' happen later. Teaching with the lesson plan in hand and consulting it (too) regularly during lesson delivery also creates doubt on the teacher's own knowledge of and preparedness for the content she was delivering. When literacy is assumed to be developed through copying texts from a chalkboard, one gets to understand teachers' construction of literacy and its uses which, in effect, manifests in the learners' weaknesses when given simple sentence construction tasks.

Despite the support of pre-planned lessons and teaching aids, good teaching practices do not always result in understanding and good performance by learners who may be lacking the necessary background information and base skills. Things need to come together properly and over time (Bronfenbrenner and Morris, 1998) for literacy to develop. It takes time, gradually developed by multi-connected, systematic practices that are built on layers of prior knowledge.

What we learn from this scenario is that the meso to microsystemic interplay and the strategies used in the microsystem are influenced by multiple factors, often outside of the microsystem itself and independent of the actors within the microsystem.

I analysed the literacy capabilities that learners brought into the intermediate phase in the light of the curriculum demands that the level required from the entrants. The language and literacy skills learners have on moving from one grade to another may not necessarily match the curriculum content that is made visible in the textbooks, readers, tests/exercises and other learning materials the learners encounter in the grade. Equally, the nature of experiences required to deal with such materials and content may not necessarily be consistent with the skills the learner has at that point.

7.3.3 The Vocabulary Lesson

Below is a description of a vocabulary lesson delivered by Ms Bati of Nellus to her grade 3 class on November 7, 2011. The lesson typifies the nature, depth and strategy/level of vocabulary lessons teachers delivered to their learners in readiness for the transition to the intermediate phase. The point here is to show that if the level of preparation for transition is not consistent with the expectations of the target grade, then learners would find it difficult to bridge the gap in content and literacy between the grades.

> *Ms Bati (Nellus, grade 3) writes the topic, "New Words" on the board and sticks word cards on the chalkboard while learners read the words aloud. One learner makes an attempt before the rest chorus it out. The learners repeat the words in groups. The learners explain the meaning of each word to the teacher. The words are; church, match, bush, lunch, brush, ash, and wish. Learners construct sentences of their own using the*

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given words. The word bush is explained by learners as 'a small tree', 'a group of trees', and 'somewhere where one can hide'. Asked why he says so the learner who gave the last explanation says that's what it means when they play a game called hide-and-seek. The class is asked to take out their dictionaries and look for the word bush. The meanings from the dictionary are read and explained by the teacher.

The words are read again several times by the whole class. One learner is asked to read alone. She cannot read the words. The other learners near her help her through the list. Ms Bati goes to the chalkboard and adds –es on each word to make plural forms and the class reads out the new words. The learners are asked to explain the differences in meanings between the singular and their plural forms. A learner explains that "church is one and churches is two or more." Similar explanations are given for all other words by the learners. The learners read the singular and plural forms of the words several times again as teacher points on the board the words to be read. Ms Bati erases the plural forms and asks learners to fill these back in as written work for the lesson.

Ms Bati's lesson shows how learners taught through English from grade 1 could deal with basic English vocabulary, English reading and word usage in the classroom. Vocabulary teaching was interlinked with spelling, fluency, word attack skills, sentence construction and comprehension in a way that made teaching easy. Also interesting was how the teacher made use of the communal reading (chorusing) and repetition strategies to teach decoding (Hoadley, 2012). The quality of interaction between learners and the teacher, as well as learners and their learning resources (dictionaries), shows a clear distinction for the better with that between Ms Morena and her class which I described earlier in this section.

Ms Bati had selected these words from unit 6 of the textbook *English for the New Nation* that I analysed earlier in this chapter. While it might be argued that the words Ms Bati used for this literacy event were too easy, particularly when compared to vocabulary items selected in the sections above (section 7.2.3) from the same textbook, it is clear that the rapport was extensive and conducive for active learning. However, her choice of the topic as 'new words' for a class that had learnt English from Grade 1 and the words involved in the literacy event raise questions on the level at which this class was operating. If words such as bush, church, wish, lunch, brush, ash and match are new, then what do the learners know about English vocabulary, particularly in the light of the content for language structures and conventions listed in table 7.1? At the end one discovers the lesson was actually on plural forms. The error in identifying the lesson topic could be related with the choice of simple words, which in effect diminishes the substance (Chick, 1996) of the lesson.

The explanation by a learner that bushes 'are where someone can hide' shows some of the comprehension strategies used by learners to deal with content in their learning. To this learner the term bush is associated with the hide-and-seek game that children play. Before the child found a referent the term could have been difficult for him. Associating a word with something concrete and within the linguistic repertoires of childhood appeared to unlock content and vocabulary for learners. Also, the literacy event demonstrates how learners assist one another (Corsaro, 2010) through in their literacy journey.

Even though Ms Bati received quite interesting responses when she asked learners to construct their own sentences with the vocabulary items she had selected, it was quite ironic that she elected to assign learners to write plural forms of the words. Given that this was an English LOLT class, and that the plurals of all the words had been written on the chalkboard before, one

wonders why the teacher chose a fill-in task rather than allowing children to construct their own sentences using plural forms of the words (see table 7.1 above). The task became too easy for some of the learners as it bordered on mere recall. In this case the teacher appeared to elect a soft strategy that implicitly was below the demands of the curriculum in grade 3 where learners are called upon to generate texts of their own. Such practices also reflect how teachers constructed and used literacy at this level.

7.3.4 The Fluency Lesson

In the following section I describe a literacy event that provides evidence of grade 3 learners at Kolo struggling to read with reasonable fluency and the corresponding strategy the teacher used to manoeuvre the lesson.

Learners take out their readers and open page 6 to read. Four learners are selected to come to the front and read to the rest of the class. The first learner is asked to read the sentences, 'Flipper the little fish is in the net. There are bigger fish in the net as well'. These are the first two sentences in the text. The learner struggles with these two sentences for about two minutes, stuttering with every word, staring at every syllable and repeating these as many as five times each, while Ms Morena attempts to assist her through. The learner appears to lack the confidence to attack every word until Ms Morena reads it first. In the first sentence the learner only managed /is/ while in the second she also got /in the/ right. The next reader attempts to read in a suppressed voice and is hardly audible to the rest of the class. The teacher appears irritated and agitated by the low, depressed reading and yells at the learner to read aloud. Again she guides him through two sentences before moving to the third learner. As she moves from one

learner to the next the rest of the class are seated silently and looking at the learner whose turn it was to read. They are reminded to point at the section of the text being read.

Thulani, a fourth reader, takes over and reads reasonably better. He reads page 6 and moves to page 7 with minor corrections. Thulani does not appear to be reading to everyone because he is hardly audible to the rest of the class. He appears to think he is only reading to the teacher. Thulani guesses some words as what he reads is not always a correct attempt of the words in the text. He reads /won't/ as /want/ and continues as if there is no error committed. Thulani seems concerned for speed and fluency at the expense of accuracy and meaning (if he was comprehending he should have detected the discontinuity and loss of meaning in the sentence he read). Rutendo is picked and now reads more clearly, louder and with intonation and observance of punctuation. She is very different from the rest of the class in her reading. She is given a 'shine' clap at the end of her reading.

After Rutendo's reading the rest of the class is told to sleep as the teacher works with one child at a time. Those who struggled with reading are told to sit in front. A reader who has struggled with his section joins the learners in front but forms a new group where other struggling readers eventually join. The lesson shifts to learners in front reading to each other the section that has already been read.

This literacy event shows large sections of a class that struggle to decode with reasonable fluency and comprehension due to lack of basic reading skills of word attack, phonics and sight vocabulary of high frequency words. Ms Morena chose to begin this literacy event, which

involved reading aloud, with struggling readers whom she eventually isolated and sent to sit on the floor in front of the class. Fluent readers only read later towards the end of the event. Even then, listeners were asked to follow the struggling readers by pointing at the words being read. In the end the teacher was reading the words and sentences as only one reader successfully attempted reading after her. Because of Ms Morena's strategies to the teaching of reading fluency, it is clear most of her grade 3 learners would get to grade 4 unable to read with fluency and comprehension. While the sentences in this literacy event were quite basic, learners in her class still struggled to read them. In cases such as this modelling or demonstration reading while all learners follow could have been an indispensable strategy.

The learners' difficulties with reading (in all its forms) appeared to irritate the teacher, resulting in her yelling at one of the learners who was reading in a low voice. What probably agitated the teacher was the learner's struggle with what the teacher perceived as easy words and the apparent lack of confidence in the learner. Her initial literacy teaching strategy did not appear to cater for the different abilities of learners in her class as illustrated by Thulani and Rutendo's readings. In the end the whole literacy event did not flow smoothly.

Clear from this literacy event are some of the strategies used by learners to circumvent their literacy challenges. Struggling readers appeared to await the teacher's assistance when they met difficult words in this class rather than anticipate assistance from their peers. Thulani appeared to construct good reading to mean speed rather than accuracy and comprehension. His insensitivity to punctuation and incorrect reading of some words demonstrated this. Neither was the teacher concerned with this discrepancy as it went uncorrected. Reading involves different levels of decoding, responding and comprehending, at affective and cognitive levels (Walsh, 2006), critiquing and analysing. It cannot be static, as Thulani appeared to read, but rather a constant

interaction between the reader and his/her text. A reader has to be 'reading' at the personal, the symbolic and the social levels. Unfortunately, in this class the strategy of 'listening' to what one is reading was not in practice.

The very choice of beginning a read-aloud lesson with individual reading by struggling readers sets up the lesson to fail. Equally, making learners go to the front and read individually to the teacher while others observe or sleep appeared to deny learners opportunities for individual practice. Teaching reading, central to literacy development as it may be, is a specialised area that cannot be assumed of every teacher to handle with expertise. It calls for training and support. Reading aloud to the teacher proved that the majority of learners in Ms Morena's class were struggling to read with fluency and comprehension. Learners were making numerous mistakes while reading aloud and even after the teacher, necessitating several repetitions of simple sentences.

Ms Morena blamed the school's approach to literacy through home language isiZulu for the bulk of her class' failure to read with fluency and comprehension. She argued English reading was significantly different to isiZulu reading because "the alphabets (sic) are different, syllables different and sentence structures as well" (DVT A009 on 02.12.2011). However, her argument could not be corroborated by reading in isiZulu/Sepedi where similar discrepancies were noted. The fact that she allowed errors made by learners during reading to go uncorrected (Krashen's output hypothesis in the natural approach) points to a limitation in the strategy, and flawed conception of reading.

Generally, the vocabulary and reading performance of learners, particularly at Kolo, was below the standards stipulated in the policy guidelines (DBE 2011a-f) and other assessment documents.

I develop this strand of this study in chapter 8 with analyses of the quality of written work. Also clear was the fact that learners at Nellus appeared to perform better (48% in ANAs of 2010) than those in Kolo (12% respectively) in most aspects of literacy. This distinction was attributed to, among other variables such as the quality of teachers and resources, the fact that learners at Nellus had approached schooling through the English medium that better prepared them for skills applicable across the subjects they learned. As such, transfer became automated, methods and strategies amenable to learners and literacy acquisition, retrieval and usage strategies consistent across subjects in grade 4. The gulf between grade 3 and 4 became narrower for Nellus learners than those at Kolo who had language to also contend with.

7.3.5 The Comprehension Lesson

The following reading comprehension lesson was delivered by Ms Lekai to her grade 4 class at Nellus on the 2nd of March 2012. I isolated this particular lesson to illustrate the gulf between grade 3 literacy teaching as illustrated by Ms Bati's lesson on new words and that of Ms Morena that I described above. Also important are the different teaching strategies and literacy demands on the learner across the grades and their effect on learning outcomes (performance).

Ms Lekai greets the class and asks learners to take their seats. She asks learners what they remember from the previous lesson. One learner replies; 'We learn about transport'.

Teacher: 'what about transport?'

Another learner: 'people going to work'.

Teacher: 'Anyone else?'

There are no other hands. The teacher proceeds to recap the lesson in question and asks learners to take out their English text books. Meanwhile the teacher writes the words polluted, jungle, dangerous, protest, banner, rainforest and destroy on the chalkboard. The teacher reads the words aloud as children chorus them after her. Each word is read three times. The teacher then explains the meaning of each word briefly to the class and learners are asked to open page 10 of their textbooks for a story titled "Kiddy Times." They are told to read the story silently for 5 minutes. Afterwards the teacher reads the story aloud to the class. On completion she initiates a reading game in which boys chorus a full sentence before girls take over the next. The game goes on until the passage is read the third time. On completion the teacher asks questions that invoke sight vocabulary using questions such as 'what word comes after..., what word comes before… what word comes between… and …?' Children give one-word answers by identifying the correct word in question.

In the textbooks are the following practise questions:

1. Who is the story about?

2. Why does he care about the forest?

3. Why was his father unhappy that he wanted to walk to the forest?

The teacher asks learners to retell the story. A learner gives one sentence and leaves the rest of it for the others. Four learners in all make the attempt. The teacher then retells the story in Sotho, then in isiZulu. An attempt is made to discuss the three questions above but learners struggle to construct sentences.

T: How did Omar feel about people chopping down trees?

L: He feel sad.

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T: Why do you think he felt this way?(teacher repeats in Sotho and isiZulu translation).There is no answer for a moment. Later a learner tries and says, 'because he likes trees'. The answer is accepted with a 'very good'.

T: Why do you think the Mexican president didn't reply to his letter (reading from the textbook)? Different answers are attempted such as he didn't see it, he was busy and he did not like to reply. Also reading from the textbook, the teacher asks, 'how do we know that Omar cared about trees?' and 'write two sentences that tell us that Omar cared about trees'. After a brief explanation the teacher writes the answers to these questions on the board. She then writes 5 fill-in questions as written work of the day.

There appeared to be a gap between grade 3 and 4 content in terms of the literacy demands on the learner as illustrated in textbooks, other resources and curriculum statements vis-à-vis the literacy capabilities grade 3 had equipped the learners. While teachers interpreted grade 3 content as calling for basic literacy skills such as book handling, left to right orientation, phonemic and phonological awareness and basic decoding, grade 4 called for the application and comprehension of meta-knowledge of what has been decoded. The interpretation of grade 3 content in this way is inconsistent with the demands of the policy statements under both NCS and CAPS. As discussed in chapter 5, grade 3 reading should include elements of comprehension, vocabulary usage and generative writing. This misconception left grade 3 teachers teaching below the curriculum statements' demands. Grade 4 teachers appeared to take it for granted that the learners already had these skills and thus advanced them to other higher order skills (DVT A033 on 07.06.2012).

In grade 4 onwards concepts work in relation to each other as demonstrated by the teacher's attempt to relate concepts in this passage to the previous lesson. However, the words listed as vocabulary, though not explained in context in this particular lesson, are more cognitively demanding especially when compared to the words Ms Bati selected. Similarly, children are tasked to read silently and individually first before the teacher's demonstration reading. These strategies, as I have already alluded to earlier in this section, were significantly different to what and how grade 3 had prepared the learners. Even the reading activity and the sight vocabulary activity did not cater for the reading challenges that were prevalent among learners, resulting in very few boys and girls doing all the reading and word identification on others' behalf. This was principally because grade 4 content assumed learners bring sets of skills from grade 3.

The nature of the questions proffered by the text reflects a significant shift from the one-word answer, fill-in questions that teachers preferred. One had to read the passage fluently and accurately, understand issues of deforestation as well as governance before dealing with the vocabulary and geographical issues in question. The questions were largely open ended and expository, requiring the learner to understand the text before attending to the key words in the question and then constructing their own sentence in response to the question. Despite this progressive guideline provided by the textbook, Ms Lekai opted to assign an exercise in which learners copied answers to some questions and then filling in missing words in sentences. We can surmise that the exercise was a response to the learners' challenges with English that limited their expression.

Given the international outlook of the passage and grade 4 content in general one would expect the teacher to at least show the learners the map of the Americas and locate the state of Mexico wherein the passage was based. Failure to that one would have expected at least an explanation

that Mexico is a country in South America and so on to help locate the passage in time and space. Although this did not happen, the passage saves to illustrate both the pedagogical and content gap between grade 3 and 4 and the challenges this poses for transition.

The section above has attempted to illustrate the different strategies teachers employed in teaching literacy in relation to the general challenges the learners had in their literacy skills. Also evident in the section was the lack of strategy in what could be perceived as easy, common sense situations. Such lack of sound literacy pedagogy rendered the level of preparation for transition inadequate for the literacy demands of the grade 4 curriculum.

7.4 Constraints in the Teaching of Reading

In situations of crowding such as the case at Nellus School, with barely any space to move between rows among grade 3s, teaching methods and strategies could not be business as usual. Teachers complained that the numbers they were dealing with were way out of the ordinary, under extra ordinary environments of multilinguality (Aronin and Singleton, 2012) and changing circumstances and curricula.

> T: That's a big problem (reading) because of class sizes. If you have 69 learners how are you going to manage that? It's more than too much. Some of them you cannot even see them. You only discover them very late that they cannot read. But even then, how are you going to cope with that if there are 69 of them and you are 1? You can't. Even if you want to help, what if there are 30 of those, what are you going to do? Will you manage? Because 30 is almost half the class. How can one manage with 69 learners? DVT A013 on 02.12.2011.

The grade 3 teacher at Nellus poses a series of rhetorical questions that point to conditions that render her performance impossible. In her view 69 learners seated in one classroom with one teacher are by far too many. By inference the teacher makes known that about half of the learners

in her class were unable to read (Taylor, 2012; Spaull, 2013). Her estimation was quite conservative as observation data pointed to about two thirds of the class as lagging behind in reading. Only one and half rows of learners, grouped according to ability and sitting in a class of 6 columns of desks and 6 rows with 2 learners per desk could read with reasonable fluency. The situation was similar (if not worse) in the other grade 3 class I worked with in the early stages of this study in this school. Similarly, the complaints at Kolo moved to learners who did not have an adequate language base to found reading on. Remarked one teacher at Kolo;

> T: Yes, even their mother tongue is not rich enough for learning purposes. They are struggling (to read) DVT A010 on 07.12.2011.

In chapters 3 and 6 I pointed out that diversity in classrooms could have the detrimental effect of rendering the learners languageless through languages of instruction that were not the mother tongue to most learners. If the languages they had were not 'rich enough for learning purposes' it implies their reading abilities were circumstantially compromised. With grade 4 awaiting learners who were able to read to learn, the learners were bound to 'struggle,' and the grade 3 teachers should know this truth. With circumstances militating against their practice, teachers had to find strategies to navigate round these challenges. The teacher's observation on the linguistic poverty of learners was an interesting finding that needs to be contextualised in the multilingual discourses in the Tshwane South district schools where kasitaal (Makalela, 2015) has a significant presence.

Teachers reported a discrepancy between what they claimed were pedagogical methods taught to them during teacher training and what eventually confronted them when they teach. While universities/colleges taught them specific methods for teaching literacy such as the phonic (Griffiths, 2004), whole word, sentence, audio lingual (Richards and Rodgers, 1986), natural

method (Krashen, 1985), communicative methods and others, on getting into the classroom they are confronted by situations and circumstances college/universities would not have prepared them for. Said one teacher at Nellus;

> T: What they teach us at colleges and university is just a fraction. Real teacher training occurs when you stand in front of 70 children to teach reading, all of them failing to read a passage they must answer questions on (DVT A014 on 02.12.2011).

The teacher makes an interesting comment by reflecting that teaching experience teaches more than theory learnt in class. She also made reference to issues of overcrowding I discussed earlier, yet the system demanded that she use pre-prepared lesson plans that the GPLMS (district office) availed for use. Also, the teacher alludes to issues of the majority (she actually uses 'all') of learners who struggle to read when conditions do not allow for individualised instruction. As such, teachers were often confronted by situations that called for their own methods, strategies and techniques that speak to their circumstances and not traditional, theory-based methods. In the same vein, some teachers called for parental involvement in literacy teaching so that there is continuity in learning between home and school. This call was ironic in the sense that learners appeared to depend on home support more than teacher support in literacy learning, as I report in chapter 8 of this study. Noted the deputy principal of Kolo School;

> T: I think teaching is a three legged pot. If only two parties are involved and the third does not play its part, the pot won't balance…. The one who unlocks what the learner must know, the teacher; the one receives, the learner; and the one who must make sure that when the learner comes from school he/she consolidates this learning, the parent. If that consolidation does happen … (DVT A011 on 07.12.2011).

 The deputy principal metaphorically alludes to the eco-systemic principle of balance and compares learning to a three legged cooking pot that must balance on the fire when cooking. By

inference she means that learning is like cooking learners into ripened readers and writers. To her a better recipe is one that incorporates all three players. The discrepancy still lies in the distrust that learners have of the school system, which results in them seeking help from external sources in the home.

Data gathered through lesson observation and interviews show a pattern in which teachers draw on strategies to ameliorate the challenge of large numbers which revolve around teacher-talk methods such as explanation and exposition as well as discursive strategies such as topic discussion, pre-teaching of vocabulary, picture/graphics discussion, demonstration reading by either the teacher or one good learner reader, exemplar reading of a small section of a passage as well as self-monitoring methods using finger pointing. These were often followed by written work. Also prevalent was the use of language translation methods especially at Kolo where English language learning was still at early readers' stage (Pacific Resources for Education and Learning, 2012) and in grade 3 at Nellus where some amount of English vocabulary was often used in comprehension passages. Opportunities for individualised instruction in reading were minimal in both schools due to skewed teacher-learner ratios. Teachers appeared to resort to compensation strategies (Ellis, 1994; Ljungberg, 2011) such as avoidance, gesturing, guessing, using mnemonics and so on without real learner based tuition that focused on reading as a cognitive, memory, affective and social process in which communication and learning take place.

As I discussed earlier in this chapter, grade 3 teachers insisted on learners pointing with their fingers at the section of the book they would be reading up to the end of the foundation phase programme. This practice was in spite of curriculum documents that clearly specified that learners should not be pointing with their fingers at this level. Whether such practices continued

as a result of an understanding of the performance level of the learners or was a result of teachers not being aware of what the curriculum prescribed with regards to the effect of finger-pointing on fluency and reading speed, and hence comprehension, remained unclear. One grade 3 teacher at Kolo defended the practice by remarking thus; "That is how we teach reading here. It's how we do it" (DVT A012 on 07.12.2011). The teacher here disguises the cultural and ideological assumptions that underpin the school's conception of literacy as a neutral, technical skill and therefore universal. I assumed that 'here' meant the school and district, but not South Africa as a country.

The ability to read situations and adapt to their demands was a critical skill essential in schools such as Kolo and Nellus. Pedagogy cannot be rigid. Methods need to change in different circumstances. Observed the deputy principal of Nellus School;

> T: Like I have said, that is based on teachers' skills and knowledge. Right now I am complaining over methodology being inadequate among teachers. It impacts negatively on the system at large…. Teachers need to be equipped with teaching skills. The authorities have to do something about it (DVT A012 on 07.12.2011).

The deputy principal here 'complains' and points to the dearth of methodological skills that are 'inadequate' among qualified teachers. It would seem qualified teachers are unable to teach. Her observation echoes findings of other studies (Fleisch, 2008; Jansen, 2005; SACMEQ III, 2007) that have bemoaned the lack of skills among teachers in South African schools. In her view the situation is so dire as to require the intervention of the authorities, who should do 'something'. The deputy principal does not take responsibility in the matter. In her view the schools do not have the level of authority and expertise, through staff development programmes, that can meet the gravity of this problem. Yet the ecological systems model propounds that systems work

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better only when there is goodness of fit between all factors involved in a process, and at the opportune time. I return to this deputy principal's comments later in this chapter.

7.5 Confronting Literacy Challenges

Despite the challenges of large class sizes and a schooling system that militated against the acquisition of reading skills, the reality that beckoned was that the learners had to learn to read and read to learn. Schooling had to function, and productively so. Despite learners leaving grade 3 with inadequate reading skills and English language knowledge to confront the demands of the grade 4 curriculum, still the strategies to ameliorate the situation remained necessary and had to be applied. The learners had to learn. How teachers confronted those circumstances is the focus of this section.

Intermediate teachers expected learners to complete grade 3 with a reasonably high degree of reading and writing abilities. Content subject teachers appeared to concentrate on the content of their subjects when learners got to grade 4. To the majority of teachers, literacy development was the preserve of the language teachers and, thus, was not supposed to affect them, in their thinking.

When learners came apparently lacking in these skills teachers resorted to tactics and strategies that averted the trouble of marking wrong punctuation, grammar, spelling and other encumbrances by giving written work that was easy to mark such as fill-in exercises, drawings, one word answers, copying notes and so on. These kinds of tasks eliminated marking problems of multiple, construction, punctuation, spelling, chronology, sequence and other errors of other kinds teachers would have to deal with. Learners were often given exercises in which they would copy whole sections and just insert the answer, which they would often underline, before

submitting for marking. The teacher would then go straight to the distinct answer, if s/he is the one marking after all, before moving on. In the belief that every teacher was a literacy teacher (Fisher and Ivey, 2005) a female teacher at Kolo remarked;

> T: If they teach EMS for example, they would concentrate on EMS content and forget that to know EMS content is to know the language of that subject. Knowing maths is not knowing how to deal with numbers but rather the language of numbers (DVT A023 on 22.05.2012).

She went on to explain that maths teachers think that knowing the four basic operations (+, -, x and ÷) is what maths implies. They tended to ignore word sums where learners would need to read and understand. She bemoaned the way teachers failed to capitalise on reading literacy (Fisher and Ivey, 2005) in their lessons. "We don't give learners adequate opportunities to read and write. Unless it's one word answers the teachers aren't satisfied. Explaining, constructing fresh sentences and the like all lie with the language educator" (DVT A023 on 22.05.2012). In the HoD's view, whatever strategies teachers use in their subjects should encompass reading and writing, but this was not the case. Her views were corroborated by observation data from class visits and documentary evidence in children's exercise books in which literacy related errors largely went uncorrected. This speaks to some particular understanding of literacy by teachers that works against learner needs in transitioning.

The case of commitment I alluded to in the paragraph above evokes the issue of teaching skills and attitude of teachers towards their work. The deputy principal of Nellus clearly captured this matter when she commented that teaching skills and general knowledge must be required of teachers before they can be required in learners. She lamented the lack of both methodology and literacy skills in the teachers and used the interview to call on "authorities" to consider serious staff development as, in her words, "it impacts negatively on the system at large." While she

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indicated that the school had localised staff development programmes, these had little effect since 'change should start from within'. In her view, beautiful programmes on staff development are of little effect if the moral element is not addressed first. The deputy principal then indicated that the school had no capacity to deal with issues of human relations.

The deputy principal of Nellus opines that the effect of the 'human dimension' (Goodall, 1982:34) may be a central component of a program's success, observing that such interesting possibilities of good teaching practices could impact positively on transitioning and literacy development. This study did not find concrete evidence among teachers on how they cushion the impact of transition but it was clear that some teachers were loved by learners more than others because they took personal and organizationally sensitive interest in learners as people rather than learning units. The case of Ms Fire, the grade 4 teacher at Nellus whom learners quoted as encouraging them to listen (in chapter 8) to themselves when they read to ensure comprehension was a case in point. Such attention to literacy development in the transition period not only assists students educationally but also to make them make sense of the transition process, encouraging confidence in the present and building hope for the future.

 The deputy principal's contribution to knowledge levels appeared to impinge on leadership and management in schools. Where good leadership subsists, issues of communication between teachers, staff development and parental involvement would be easily marshalled. Management must make sure such practices happen. Her observations on the lack of knowledge and skills among teachers were corroborated by lesson observation and the kinds of questions written for learners to answer. I revisit this strand in chapter 8 on writing to learn.

The complex issue of language teaching methods (Richards and Rodgers, 1986; Rodgers, 2001) was evident throughout this study. Very complex matters were taught by teachers as if they are common sense. The teachers appeared to think that telling learners things without actively involving them in processing them would result in learning. To those teachers children could be told things and learn in the process. However, experience teaches us that only when practically and actively involved do the majority of learners get to grasp the content under instruction. Put simply, writing is best taught through the act of writing, just as reading is best taught through practically working with text at individual level.

7.6 Conclusion

Data in this chapter has shown that the experiences teachers and learners undergo during transition from grade 3 to 4 are quite challenging to both parties in terms of the physical, intellectual, pedagogical and structural aspects the teachers and learners had to contend with. The strategies teachers employed to prepare learners for transition appeared to have an effect on learners' performance. Such strategies could be enhanced by improved communication between and among teachers. On the other hand teachers adjusted their practices to relate to the situations they found themselves in. Such strategies appeared to consider class size, available resources, nature of content and other such variables.

The acquisition of technical skills involving decoding of written texts and writing of simple statements are indispensable in literacy development. Teachers resorted to methods and strategies of brokering (Mazak, 2006; Perry, 2009) literacy development that made work easier for themselves without enough consideration on the long term impact of literacy acquisition children required.

Chapter 8: Learner Experiences in Transition

8.1 Introduction

In a world where competence and assessment are conducted through writing, studies on literacy need to prioritize learners' experiences with, competences in and attitudes to reading and writing. Of importance is the prominence of learner voices in these studies. What teachers and learners do with reading, writing and texts in their contexts and why they do it (Perry, 2012), how those practices connect to, and are shaped by values, attitudes, feelings and social relationships inform this chapter. Notions about literacy have changed over the years, including beliefs that literacy is a singular skills set (see Street, 2007 on the autonomous model) and that people are either literate or illiterate (Muth and Perry, 2010). In chapter 7 I described learners who learned under circumstances that rendered their reading and writing levels below par. I discussed the literacy (print) rich environment in grade 3 that disappeared on moving to grade 4 as well as the resources that were inconsiderate to the skills that learners had. I also discussed teaching strategies and pedagogies that appeared to favour communal learning at the expense of the needs of the individual.

Using the sociocultural approach to literacy, this chapter analyzes how the learners' difficulties were reflected through their written outputs, and juxtaposes the state of written work with theories that point to a grade 4 performance slump (Sanacore and Palumbo, 2009; Chall, 1996). The chapter focuses on children's experiences with literacy as reflected through the works they produced, feelings they expressed as well as through writing in their exercise books, papers and other sources. The written work is considered in terms of the types of writing and the amount of writing, the quality, purpose and procedure for writing. The chapter largely analyses data from the second dataset when learners moved to grade 4 during the period January-June 2012 in daily

exercises and other assessments. But, first I set the scene with learners' experiences of grade 3 and the anxiety they had for grade 4.

8.2 Preparing for Transition

Focused group discussions with learners in grade 3 over their expectations and preparation for transition to grade 4 reflected a sense of ambivalence, both fear of and anxiety for grade 4. While some expressed excitement and enthusiasm, the others appeared to fear what awaited them in the grade ahead. The absence of clear guidance and support for this uncertainty emanated from the fact that learners did not know what awaited them in grade 4, largely due to the absence of supportive transition programs. In a focus group discussion with five Nellus learners recorded below, the fear and hesitancy for grade 4 is clear in the learners' own views:

R: /Okay! What are you doing to prepare for grade 4? Do you think grade 4 will be easy?/

All: /No sir!/ [chorus]

R: /Why do you think it will be difficult?/

Kate: /Because grade 4 is not the same as grade 3/

R: /Why? What is different?/

Thuli: /They don't teach the same things. Some of the grade 3 things are easy and grade 4 we don't know/

R: /Yoh! So, what else is different?/

Boikantso: /It is different because in grade 3 the things are not the same things as in grade 4, and the teachers are not the same people/

Thabo: /Because the books in grade 4 are not the same as the grade 3 ones/

R: /So if the books are different does it mean they are going to be hard?/

Thuli: /Sir, have you ever taught grade 4? And all the things they teach there are hard/

R: /How do you know those things?/

Thuli: /I have a sister who failed in grade 4, neh. She says they don't play there/

Boikantso: /Even my mother tells me to read hard because grade 4 is no joke/

Kate: / Even their school bags are very big and full of many books/

R: /I will talk to you again next year when you are in grade 4 to find out if you will be finding grade 4 easy or difficult. I know already that grade 4 things are very easy[14]. So you must go and play and relax knowing that ..../

Thabo: /No, sir! They are not easy/[shaking her head]

R: /Yes! They are easy. I am telling you/

Thuli: /Ah! They write EMS that we don't know, and Life Orientation, and MO/

Amukelani: /And Technology, aibo!/ (DVT A003 on 01.12.2012).

This discussion between the researcher and the five learners points at the fear and uncertainty among grade 3 learners over what awaited them in the next grade. However, they remained aware that the curriculum, teachers and books were different and harder. This ambivalence was not helped by views from the mesosystem (family members) which seemed to confirm the fears as founded and true. The child is likely to believe if they hear from a sister who failed in grade 4 that "they don't play there' and that grade 4 is 'no joke'. Such fear was confirmed by the visibly big school bags that the learners saw with the grade 4s. The discussion above, thus, appeared like the chronicle of a horror movie in which learners constructed themselves as the victims. Much as

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[14] This comment must be understood in the context that I had not fully understood the complexities of the issues and so I had not anticipated the direction data was leading at the time of the interview. It was not a deliberate and false assurance to learners.

the researcher attempted to reassure the learners that there was nothing to fear or dread, the learners appeared certain and convinced that horror was coming to them. Such an attitude does not augur well for transition. Bronfenbrenner and Morris (1998) observe that systems in a child's immediate environment have a strong influence on the child. The people in these microsystems have phenomenal influence on the child (Dockett and Perry, 2007) since the child's attitude is shaped by their relationships. Such nested structures, however, also provided challenges that pointed at solutions to this situation as lying with the learners themselves who should 'read harder'. It would appear that 'reading harder' threw the ball back into the learners' court rather than provide an externally driven (rescue) plan for learners.

The curriculum adopted subjects whose names struck fear among learners such as EMS, Life Orientation and Technology, the latter which Amukelani clearly dreaded as depicted by his exclamation 'aibo!' When the curriculum, teachers and the system changed, this called for psychological preparation of the learners for such psychological transition.

The ambivalence also reflected itself through enthusiasm and excitement for the big move to the new grade. All the learners in this study indicated that they had not felt similar excitement, discomfort, doubt or fear when they moved from other grades before. Excitement and enthusiasm were notable largely among those learners who were performing very well in their school work in both schools. One learner asserted; "I enjoy grade 3 but sometimes I get bored and think of when I am going to reach grade 4, grade 5, grade 6 and when I am going to be out of primary" (DVT A003 on 06.12.2011). Sentiments appeared to be influenced by the process, person, context and time/timing. Some learners perceived that grade 3 material was becoming too easy and they longed for bigger challenges. However, even these children thought grade 4

would be hard. The following conversation with Tshireletso (T) captures the issues under discussion:

R: /Do you think grade 4 will be easy?/

T: /No, it will be hard/

R: /What makes you think it will be hard in grade 4?/

T: /Because like neh, in grade 4 you see children carrying very many books and you get scared because next year you are going to grade 4. Yah!/

R: /Does that scare you?/

T: /Yes/

R: /You told me that you are looking forward to grade 4, but now you say you are scared?/

T: /I'm a bit nervous because today is the starting of December and the 30th is by the corner. So, I'm very very very scared/

R: /So what are you going to do so that you don't get scared?/

T: /I can, sometimes my mother neh, she helps me and tells me when she was young and in grade 4, what she did, that encourages me not to be scared a lot/ (DVT A003 min 31-39 on 01.12.2011).

What comes out clearly in this interview is that Tshireletso was convinced that grade 4 would be hard for her. She categorically retorted that grade 4 'will be hard' which made her 'a bit nervous'. She seemed unsure of the learning she had received in grade 3 and appeared to doubt her academic and psychological preparation. Of interest was the fact that Tshireletso sought support from her mother at home for a school problem. I deal with this matter in section 8.4 in which learners sought support from the exosystem over problems of a micro and mesosystemic

nature. As Tshireletso makes clear, she was "very very very scared" of grade 4 at the start of

December of her grade 3. This scary state of fear and discomfort was carried over to grade 4.

8.3 Confronting Micro-transitional Challenges

Learners were confronted by numerous challenges that culminated in confusion, anxiety and

frustration on getting to grade 4. Below is a literacy event that occurred on Thursday March 15,

2012 in a grade 4 classroom at Nellus during Ms Fire's English lesson. Ms Fire taught English

and Technology to this class. In this event two learners were struggling to identify the correct

exercise books in which to write an English task during time for written work.

Thabo: Na ke puku efe yeo re e somisago? [Which book are we writing in?]

Thuli: Na o tlile le efe wena? [Which one did you take out?] *Looking at Thabo straight in the*

face.

Thabo: Kea Mdi Fire. [It's for Ms Fire]

Thuli: Aowa, Mdi Fire o ruta dithuto tse pedi. [No, Ms Fire teaches two subjects]

Thabo: O reng? Ka nnete! Mma mma mma!… [What! Really! Yoh, yoh, yoh!]

Thuli: Ga se yeo. Ke nako ya sekguwa. [It's not that one. This is English time]

Thabo: Go lokile, bjale ke efe? [Fine, so which one is it?]

Thuli: E re ke go ntshetse yona. *Shoves through Thabo's school bag.* Tla re ngwale. [Let

me show you. Let's now write]

Thabo: Na bjale re ngwala bjang? [Now how do we write this?]

Thuli: Na go reng basa re botse? [Why don't they explain these things?]

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Thabo: *flexing his face and looking straight at Thuli. Y*ea neh! [Yes , you are right!] (21.02.2012).

The literacy event above presents a powerful example of the realization of what learners had feared in their encounters and experiences of transition to grade 4. In chapter 3 I indicated the different types of transitions this study investigated; namely academic, structural, systemic, curriculum and psychological transition. In order to understand the literacy event involving Thabo and Thuli one has to go back to the events in the first two weeks of the school year. On arrival on the first day learners were told to go and sit in classes along the class lines they had brought from grade 3 until about 11h00 while teachers sorted the logistical issues of class redistribution. The way the first day was organized left learners hanging; unaware of what was going on. The act of leaving learners alone for extended periods on the first day appeared to confirm the fears and confusion learners carried psychologically from grade 3. Whatever the teachers were arranging pertained to them, yet no one explained anything. They were left in the dark.

The next surprise of the first day of the school year was the redistribution of classes and subsequently learning resources. In both schools teachers used the registers, in which learners were already arranged in alphabetical order, and called learners into the respective classes where they then belonged. Not only did the practice separate friends and classmates, it also ensured that the classes were made up of strangers. In class the learners were almost guaranteed to share a desk with someone they had not befriended before. The community of learners that the foundation phase had taken three years to build was broken up by the redistribution, since the redistribution did not regard the needs of the learner but rather was centered on bureaucratic practices of expediency. As a symbolic and lived space the classroom became a new and unfamiliar space. Their assumed new identity as grade 4s was under challenge from the very first

day. What gets lost in these administrative systems in the school when decisions are made about class distributions is the child.

The systemic disregard and erasure of the needs, potential and capabilities of the learner in the distribution practices of the two schools was a manifestation of the insensitivities of the mesosystem to the complexities of the child as an integral element of the school ecosystem. Matching learner needs with the literacy demands of the next grade, the strengths and weaknesses of the teachers, analysis of the learning histories of the child and other such pertinent issues was set aside. Concern was on convenience rather than on academic and intellectual productivity. This disorder continued for the first two weeks of the school year. In effect the real introduction of subjects' content only started after two weeks of logistical arrangements in both schools had been dealt with.

Learners had also moved to an unfamiliar side of the school, with different furniture (often better). A class teacher allocated to them only came to mark the register in the morning and went away until the next day. The departure of the class register teacher meant the relational, interactional bond with the class teacher they had become familiar with in the foundation phase was broken. The class teacher now visited rather than lived with the class. The learners came from the foundation phase where they sat with one female teacher for the whole day and interacted with her (all grade 3 teachers were female in the two cases under this study) but now they had to contend with nine or even more different faces taking turns to make demands on them.

The subjects ballooned to nine, and often taught by impatient male teachers. Often male teachers commanded, instructed, demanded, instilled as well as dictated. Given that most of the learners

came from single parent families where probably the woman was the only parent, a male force became quite a challenge to bear. I witnessed situations where noise levels were significantly lower when male teachers were teaching than when their female counterparts were in the same class. The response to male teachers' demands for silence clearly elicited more compliance than that of some female teachers during the first school term of grade 4 (field notes 13.03.2012). I read this to mean discipline due to fear rather than respect. It was difficult to associate the kinds of behaviours in question to mere growing up in a patriarchal society.

The exercise books and textbooks learners used to leave at school now had to be carried home. School bags had become much bigger and heavier (see photographs below). The number of exercise books they used had increased six fold from three to eighteen. Textbooks had also increased from three to nine, excluding readers. The pictures below show learners' school bags containing the exercise books and readers that the learners had to carry home with them every day. In the first picture on the right a bag containing exercise books, workbooks and readers is shown. On the picture to the left the learner clearly struggles to carry her bag as shown in her posture and the other bag shown here with wheels for drawing on.

Fig 8.1 Changing conditions in Grade 4

The literacy event in which Thabo and Thuli are described confusing exercise books is loaded with complex issues with far-reaching consequences for transition. Given that the event occurred in mid-March, it tells that the cloud that hung over learners' literacy progress had been worse prior to this period. The confusion over the book to use must be understood in the context of exercise books that increased in relation to subjects in grade 4. Even then the system of offering tuition also changed, leaving Thabo to identify subjects by the teachers that offered them rather than by the subject names. Little did he realize that teachers were no longer important since they could teach more than one subject. Rather it was the subject that became paramount. This confusion could have been aggravated by the rather queer naming of subjects that began in grade 4.

In the above case Ms Fire taught two subjects to the same class, so her daily work exercise book and assessment books for each of the two subjects (total of four books) were confusing. While some learners such as Thuli were slowly catching up by mid-March, the larger cohort which included Thabo was still struggling to make head and tail of the new system. Of note in the conversation above is Thuli's loss of confidence in which she suggests someone must explain the 'things' to learners. The fact that Thabo concurs with the assertion points to a shared problem. Probably teachers took for granted that learners would discover for themselves how systems worked in grade 4. Such assumptions only served to extend the period of transition and hence contributed to poor performance in grade 4.

The grade 4 timetable accommodated the increased subjects, so the pace of doing things had become a *blitzkrieg*. In the midst of all the confusion, what gets lost in transition is the learner. Even then the learners still had to figure out a way to survive and thrive. Foundation phase timetables that learners were used to allowed them to write until they finished. As such, there

was no need to hurry. Now they were stopped even before they finished writing the date, and often the work on the board was erased by the incoming teachers. Luckily, the teachers hardly checked if their work had been done.

On noticing this discrepancy some learners adopted coping strategies and began to concentrate on finishing work for only those teachers who followed up, electing to set aside the work from those teachers who did not. As in the case of Thabo and Thuli (21.02.2012), there was a quantum leap in the academic level of content and teachers seemed not to notice this, teaching complex content as if it were common sense (see lesson accounts in chapter 7). In Kolo the English learners had started learning in September of 2011 had now become the medium of instruction in grade 4. Although teachers code-switched quite often, they switched to languages that not all the learners understood.

The whole course of events in grade 4 appeared to confirm the learners' fears of the workload, the heavy luggage, the different teachers and their different teaching styles; the classrooms as lived spaces and their 'difficult' resources or absence thereof; the learning content that they thought would be harder; and the excruciating pace at which work was demanded from them; the things they reported 'we don't know' which remained unknown to learners; and the scary environment in which they operated. Their fears were being realized. What learners thought would be an intellectual burden had also become physical. In spite of all these issues learners had to find their own means of coping with grade 4.

8.4 Learner Coping Strategies

8.4.1 Untidiness

I have presented here and elsewhere in this study the finding that transition to grade 4 was difficult for learners in terms of the confusion, frustration, anxiety and different kinds of transition that required adjustment on the learner. Coupled with the leap in content and number of subjects in the curriculum, the effect of all these factors was evident in a slump in the quality of learners' written work. The practices adopted by some of the learners are instructive of the effects of confusion and frustration among learners. Below is an observation by one learner of what some fellow learners did when they met challenging tasks during lessons. The learner described what other learners in her class did when they made mistakes or other such practices in their written work. In an attempt to justify her argument that other learners did not understand how writing was done in grade 4, the girl had this to say:

> L: A boy who sits in front of me, sitting with his friend, ooh! His book is horrible (laughs sarcastically). It's horrible. He does not understand what is grade 4, that we change subjects. They throw papers to each other and when they come to our side, ooh! you cry. Him and his friend, if you open their books neh, you will run away. They open this ball point pen, neh! Then the ink pour on their book. They just take their finger and they do like this (demonstrates), then they write. The ink pours again. They take out the pipe in the thing then they do this (demonstrates) (DVT A019 on 02.04.2012).

The learner here describes the increased level of untidiness on writing practices of her fellow learners whom she claims do not understand how grade writing works. What appears to be carelessness and lack of pride in one's work that suddenly emerges in grade 4 could be associated with the confusion and frustration I described in chapter 5. Asked what the 'culprit' was supposed to do in those situations the same girl explained in this conversation:

> L: They just keep quiet, they don't say ma'm I (made a mistake). They keep quiet and they take this and they throw away this (shows the refill part). They dip the head in the ink and they write. When it's stuck they keep doing the same.

R: You mean they put it back?

L: They take the ink and put it on the desk. So they dip the head into the ink and write. When the ink is finished they dip again until they finish.

R: So their books become a real mess!

L: A real, real terrible mess. And he does not spell his words correctly… He is fast to learn but his books, eish, sorry. Even if you don't open his books you can just see from his face that this one, aah! He is horrible. You can just see from his face (DVT A019 on 02.04.2012).

While I did not ascribe to the respondent's conception of psychology of the face, the learner here indicated procedural issues quite critical to this study. Learner practices required attention before they became endemic. It would appear the problem did not lie in frequency of writing, amount of work given and the actual issues learners wrote about but rather in the quality of teaching, the expectations teachers had of their learners, the models learners had around them and the general work ethic of the class as a whole. It may be the lack of guidance when mistakes happen, the lack of sensitivity to learner performance and the absence of standards that keep learners below quality reading and writing standards. In that case carelessness appeared to be a consequence of confusion, anxiety and lack of appropriate guidance.

8.4.2 Ask your Mother

The strategies used by learners to navigate the literacy challenges they encountered in their attempt to master concepts required careful consideration. These learning strategies were related to the strategies teachers used to ensure mastery of concepts and skills they imparted to their learners. I have described the difficulties learners encountered with texts and approaches to the curriculum which rendered learning difficult and other circumstances beyond learners' control

within their different environments. Some strategies were taught directly by teachers to the learners and some others were invented by the learners themselves in order to adjust to the unfavourable conditions that were at play. Critical to this study were the strategies learners employed to deal with these circumstances.

Interviews with learners and careful observations, both used iteratively, provided thick data for this strand of the study. Literacy challenges can be understood from the learner's own point of view. Of interest in this section was the interplay of micro, meso, and macrosystemic factors in safeguarding children's learning. While it might be tempting to think that the majority of literacy learning occurs in class, this study found that parents and other family members as well as colleagues in class play direct and pivotal roles in literacy learning. I wanted to establish what learners do if they cannot read a word, sentence, and paragraph or have a similar learning challenge. Often reading challenges at grade 3 level begin at word level and stretch to sentences and paragraphs. So, the strategies learners adopted when dealing with difficult words had a bearing on the literacies they acquired along the reading process, bearing in mind that there are various participants in children's learning.

About 85% of all grade 3 learners interviewed indicated that they would seek the help of either their mother or relative (sister, brother, grandmother, friend) when they cannot read either a word or a sentence. This finding appears to reflect a significant sociocultural dislocation that learners in the two schools had with their teachers in terms of reading. Observed one child;

> L: You must go and ask your mother or your sister at home if you cannot read a word. She will tell you. Or you must ask your friend to tell you that word. … that you are next to her or in front, or at home you must ask (DVT A002 on 01.12.2011).

Notable here is the absence of any reference to the teacher. Despite the researcher's request for this grade 4 learner to clarify her point, the learner felt it inappropriate to ask the teacher if one cannot read a word, rather opting for external support outside of the classroom. Her points of reference were her mother, sister and the neighbour in class. She seemed to have greater faith in the home than the teacher at school. From an African cultural perspective I thought the teacher, as an adult, might be seen in high regard that learners deemed it inappropriate to ask her what they regarded as trivia. Such action appeared disrespectful of an authority and adult. This observation locates literacy and the component sociocultural practices that inhibit the classroom in social and cultural settings. As such, practices in any given classroom situation call for sociocultural interpretation for them to be properly understood. The above learner's response was similar to that of another learner who categorically said she practiced reading at home.

> L: I practise at home. My mother says practice makes perfect. So, she teach (sic) me to read…. If I can't read a word I practice and I practice and I practice until I am perfect like perfect…. If I can't read the sentence then I will have to tell my mum to teach me to read it (DVT A003 on 01.12.2011).

The learner clearly outlines the role of the home in her reading competence in that it provides her with opportunities to 'practice' until she is 'perfect like perfect'. Both the unintimidating atmosphere and friendly people in the home can be more conducive for perfection, in the learner's view. The culture of being there for each other and abundant time to 'practice and practice' appears to set the learner up for learning reading and writing in ways she hardly found in grade 4 at school. The culture of the school had changed to being far less supportive in grade 4. For this child the work done at school gets more support at home by a system not directly linked to that work. The problem is that those children who do not get similar support get left behind.

On being asked as to what she would do if she could not read a whole sentence while she is at school, the same learner insisted she would go and ask at home. She only referred to the teacher in the event of a writing problem. This particular learner said she would not ask any of her colleagues because "what if he or she does not know it also?" From an ecological point of view it means that the synergies that the theory espouses between systems are compromised when the interdependence between the micro and the exo systems are broken. When teachers are viewed with distrust by those they are employed to serve, then the system becomes technically dysfunctional. In such instances transition can hardly be smooth.

8.4.3 Ask your Neighbour, Anyone

The trend appeared to shift strongly to the class neighbour in the case of a writing problem such as spelling, the answer to a question or the date. Learners appeared to support each other (Corsaro, 2010) in their learning. A description of Ms Bati's reading lesson I made in chapter 7 also reflects this. Observation data clearly pointed to learners assisting one another through discussions, assisted reading, copying from each other and sharing resources. There were often movements from one position to another as learners sought assistance of various forms from each other.

> Amukelani: I tell someone to help me… someone who is next to me, my mum or my dad or someone, the teacher, someone (DVT A003 on 01.12.2011).

In this case the learner just seeks help from wherever he can get it. Even then the teacher is listed at the end. The academically strong learners appeared to find problems with asking for help among their peers and resorted to other means such as using dictionaries, guessing and asking the teacher.

Thuli: /I can read many words in story books and dictionary. If I can't write it I look in the dictionary … or ask my mother or even the teacher/ (DVT A003 on 01.12.2011).

The learner appears to understand the close relationship between reading and writing in which confidence in reading propagates the act of writing. One being the creator and the other a creature, and yet the other (text whether read or written) is the creation. Put differently, the learner appears to pose the question, how does one write unless one believes in the human urge (Manheru, 2014) to read? In this instance the learner clearly shows no confidence in his fellow learners whom he probably construes as performing below his level. While others ask friends next to them, his confidence and sense of agency in reading 'many words' is reflected in his dependence on 'dictionary' and 'even' the teacher as sources for solutions. On asking this learner as to who had taught him to read so well, the child remarked;

Amukelani: /My mother made me a good reader because when I was young I liked to read books like, my mother read books to me when I was sleeping, and I love reading books/ (DVT A003 on 01,12.2011).

The reference to the mother and book reading to children when they are going to bed relates to sociocultural practices in many modern societies where reading is instilled from childhood and later develops as a social practice across generations (Pahl and Rowsell, 2012). The child's reference to his love of reading positions him for learning to read since his attitude is already conducive for such cognitive activities. Parents have very integral roles to play in the development of reading skills in children. A grade 3 learner at Nellus amplifies this point thus;

Kate: It's important (to read at home) because some other words at school they don't give us to read and some other words you will find them at home. You will find them at school and when they say read that word and you don't know it (DVT A003 on 01.12.2011).

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In this learner's view the school provides an incomplete corpus of words for its learners to read. As such the home has a preparatory role as well as supplementing what learners get at school.

8.4.4 Listen to Yourself

In terms of the strategies learners used to ensure comprehension of the matter they read, I depended on interactive discussions with the learners during grade 4. I chose grade 4 interview data because it is here where reading to learn becomes more pronounced in the curriculum. Of particular interest was a strategy learners reported their grade 4 English teacher (Nellus) insisted on them. They indicated that their teacher asked them to 'listen to yourself' when they read.

> Thuli: I read carefully. When I read *I listen* to what I am reading… Our teacher tells us every time that we
> must listen to what we say. And we do that the whole class [stress mine] (DVT A019 on 02.04.2012).

The grade 4 teacher here made a strong departure from the NCS foundation phase approach where learners learn to read and employed cognitive and metacognitive strategies that clearly scaffold learners into reading in order to learn, in line with the CAPS curriculum's demands. Under the CAPS regime such strategies that encouraged reading in order to learn are introduced in grade 3. Of interest was the learner's insistence that the whole class employed that strategy to enhance comprehension. This strategy for teaching comprehension was confirmed through lesson observation in which the teacher insisted that learners had to listen to what they read but whether or not learners really listened to themselves could not be confirmed by observation since it is an entirely cognitive strategy. But, from the discourse the learner used it was clear that the strategy was appreciated by the teacher's classes. Asked whether this learner employed this strategy at all times for all forms of text, the learner reflected as follows;

Thuli: Sometimes when I read I don't listen. When I go home I take out my books and ask my mother what it means. Then she explains it to me. Then I get to understand (DVT A019 on 02.004.2012).

Strategies for ensuring comprehension of materials read by learners appeared to vary as learners moved up the grades. They also appeared to vary across genres. As shown here 'sometimes' learners vary strategies according to the demands of the text and purpose for reading. Strategies such as guessing at the meanings of words and sentences (contextual clues), using dictionaries, paying attention to the reader during reading aloud were given by learners at grade 4 as opposed to pointing at words as they read and asking adults which they largely employed at grade 3. The strategies appeared to reflect a departure from dependency towards independent learning. Also, Thuli shows the interrelated link between home and school in transition when the micro, the meso and the exosystems work together. The home becomes a continuation of the school. A grade 4 learner demonstrates another strategy in this transition when he said;

Rutendo: I think and sometimes I guess... and you have to try it again and again if you can't get it right… You have to do it many times (DVT A020 on 02.04.2012).

It is not very clear here how different thinking and guessing are but what is certain is that the learner applies behaviourist strategies of trial and error and repetition to enhance comprehension in some instances. When this learner was challenged as to how he knew the way he would finally read was the right way, he reverted to his referents - the parents, other siblings and neighbours - whom he said would tell him when he does not read words or sentences properly. This also reflects a transition from largely assisted word reading and short comprehension texts to methods that become more amenable to comprehension of stories, automaticity and fluency in longer pieces of text. It also speaks to a conceptualization of literacy that is not necessarily about

meaning and that the school culture is one where independent mastery is valued. Literacy isn't seen as something one does collectively to support learning.

When well guided, learners are able to guide one another in conventional reading and writing practices. By the time they completed grade 3 learners were already aware of a set of conventional reading and writing practices. They understood the need for correct articulation and pronunciation of words, fluency, observing punctuation, book handling and care, reading distance and many other literacy practices. While some would not be practising these habits correctly, they appeared aware that literacy was a socially constructed set of habits of which they were a part. They corrected one another, shared exercise books in cases where slow writers lost work through erasure of work from the chalkboard when lessons changed, shared readers amicably, looked at each other's work and drew the attention of teachers to bad habits among their peers. The pictures below reflect some of the practices grade 4 learners engaged in as they worked.

While not all the strategies discussed here were of equal benefit to learners, it was clear that learner strategies changed significantly in grade 4 when the curriculum and the attendant literacy practices there changed. Some strategies had limited benefits to learners' literacy development while others were quite interesting and innovative in resilience to the challenges that confronted them. The way literacy had changed meant fresh adjustment and new strategies for learning. The different cultures between the home and school with regards literacy meant those learners who received support at home had to adjsut to the different conceptions of literacy through a system indirect related to literacy, while those who did not receive home support lacked a critical resource for literacy learning as they dealt with increased demands of the new phase.

Fig. 8.2 Literacy strategies at work

The first picture from left shows two learners helping one another how to read a section of text while the other listens to a question from a friend who needs help. In the middle picture the learner in a yellow shirt abandons his own work in order to assist a friend behind him while in the third picture to the right learners are shown concentrating on individual tasks. The different socially constructed literacy habits depicted in these pictures reflect the literacy practices and conceptions of literacy in this class.

8.4.5 Be Independent

Interviews with learners in grade 4 reflected the onset of transition from dependency on the home and the others to independence and agency. Because of the large volumes of unfamiliar content in grade 4 and a rather less supportive environment, learners were pushed to find ways to stave off the pressure of transition. The ecological systems theory informs us that where microsystemic conditions are unfavourable individuals will develop new ways of adjusting to their condition(s). As such they drew on the sociocultural aspects of ubuntu to scaffold one

another in their learning. As one HOD ascertained, they had to learn fast because "this period can make or break a learner for ever. For others adjustment is quick but for others it's a whole three terms lost … those that are slow will suffer until they leave school" (DVT A023 on 22.05.2012). So, the social, cultural, ecological and curricular conditions weighed on them to seek compensation strategies (Ljungberg, 2011) to the pressure of transition. Through peer collaboration and maximization of the role of the home learners were able to buffer the impact of transition in grade 4.
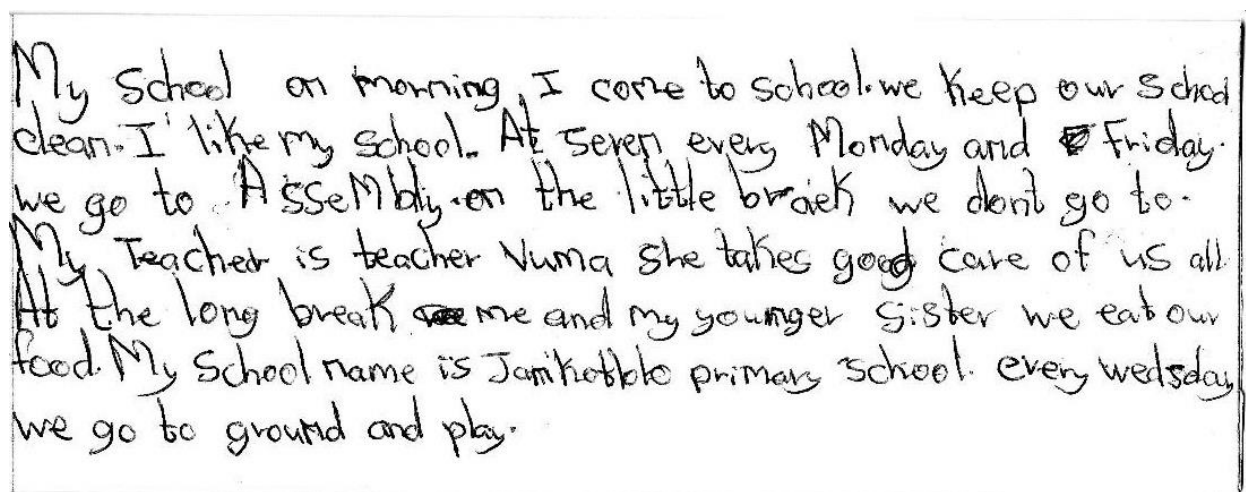
8.5 Children's Experiences with Written Literacies

At end of the foundation phase the learner was expected, among other things, to have mastered pen handling skills, left-to-right orientation skills, pen-to-paper attrition skills, book handling/positioning skills, letter shaping, spacing, basic punctuation skills (DBE, 2010) and many other such basics. At grade 4 they are expected to apply those skills in their written work across the subjects. By this time they were expected to be writing in cursive as per the dictates of the CAPS policy statements.

Fig 8.3 Changing literacy practices

The first picture (left) shows proper pen handling while the middle picture shows the proper slant one should take when writing. In the picture to the right proper book handling practices are demonstrated. Although the majority of learners at Kolo had not mastered these basic skills by the time of transition to the intermediate phase, they had used pencils up to September 2011 before transitioning to the use of ball point pens. This also coincided with the time they began to study English for periods longer than 10 minutes a day. Although learners at Nellus started using ball point pens in the first term of grade 3, their handwriting also left much to be desired due to overcrowding. The number of learners did not correspond to the amount of space available (7m x 7m square classroom for 69 learners) and thus marked the struggle for power, knowledge and representation (Hagood; 2002; Perry, 2012) that come embedded with literacy. The pieces of work below testify of the underdeveloped writing skills among learners.
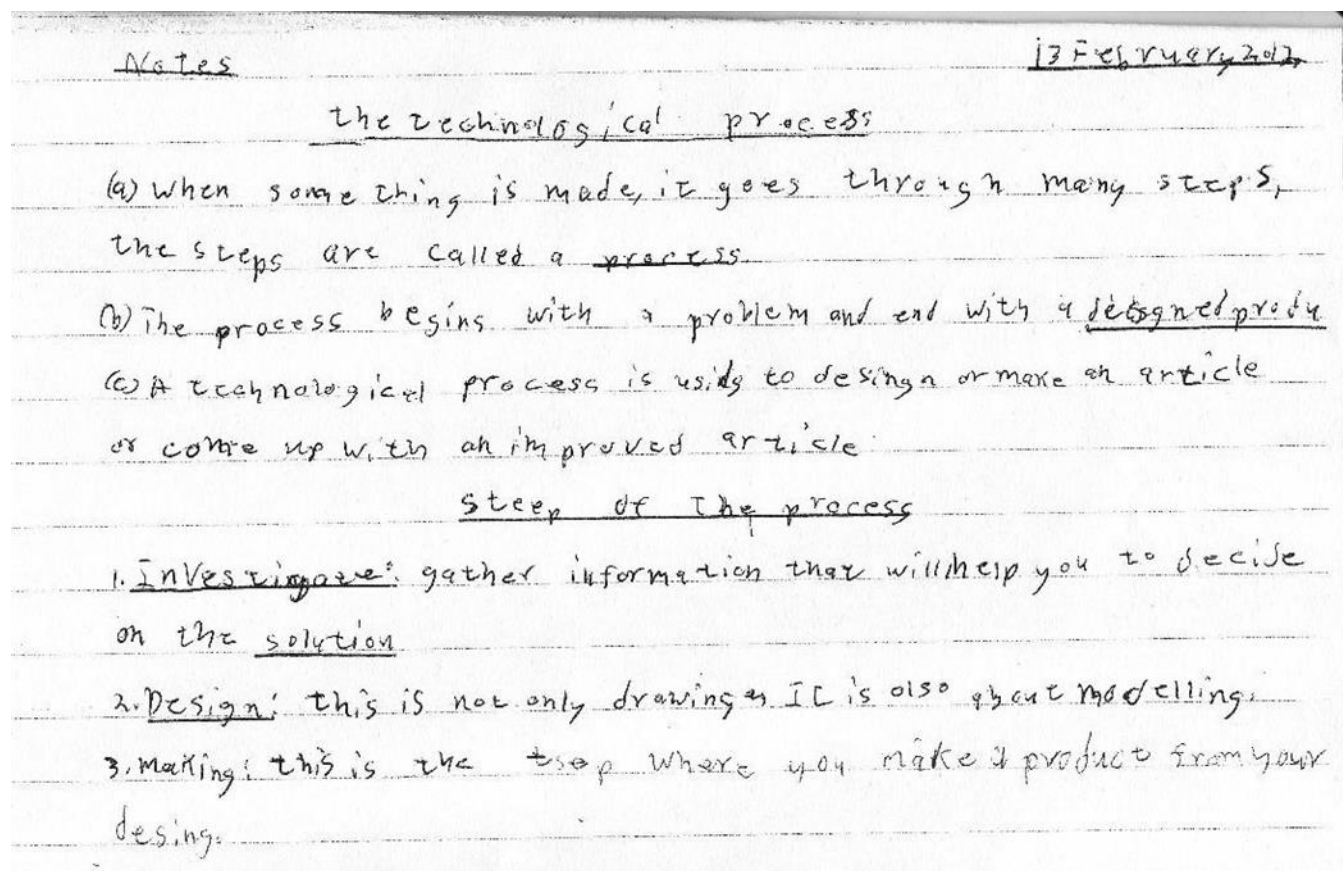

On being tested on the topic 'My School' in early December 2011, about 95% of the learners failed to produce meaningful, coordinated sentences in both schools. The task was way too demanding for the learners at Kolo who had started serious English lessons in September. They could hardly tell that the task required them to write in continuous descriptive style. So, they numbered their sentences. The culture appeared to originate from exercises that learners received

across subjects in the foundation phase. These tasks often had more than one question or task. So, learners construed the composition as requiring similar structuring of sentences.

Thuli's work above was selected among some of the best performing writers in the grade 3 class in terms of meaning, neatness and appropriateness. It is possible for the standards and technical quality of work to be higher at this level. Similarly, the process leading to the production of this text, in terms of the date and topic and possibly letter practice, required teacher attention. While it may be argued that the learner writes legibly and that the skills driven approach compromises other literacies in which the learner may be excelling, the error density in the work behooves teacher intervention and brokering. Also shown below is a piece of Boikantso's work where literacy skills were evidently at developing stage in terms of both form and content in grade 4.

Notes   13 February 2012

            The technological process

(a) When some thing is made, it goes through many steps,
the steps are called a process.
(b) The process begins with a problem and end with a designed produ
(c) A technological process is usidy to desingn or make an article
or come up with an improved article
            Steep of the process
1. Investigate: gather information that will help you to decide
on the solution
2. Design: this is not only drawings IL is also about modelling.
3. Making: this is the step where you make a product from your
desing.

While teachers in grade 4 expected speed and accuracy, the learners did not have these skills. The consequence was that teachers had to sacrifice content learning in the process in order to bridge the handwriting and penmanship gap. Handwriting automaticity is prerequisite to writing for meaning (writing to learn). It is habituated and embodied in writing to learn to the extent that unless learners master handwriting at the appropriate level, writing for meaning is compromised. Similarly, learning to read and reading to learn become important. But such reading becomes entrenched in writing. So, if handwriting is not at the appropriate level (automaticity) the result is a clear quagmire for both teachers and learners.

It would be noted that penmanship needed attention in the case of Boikantso. Such inadequate penmanship skills pervaded the classes in this study. The standard of work could be better at grade 4 level. Given that the learner was copying 'notes' one would expect a better level of accuracy than is displayed here. As such I found it difficult to buy into the skills only approach, without the attendant processes that lead to production of standard written work.

In terms of the types of written work in both schools, the learners generally wrote sentences, filled in missing words, drew diagrams and labelled them, and in sporadic cases constructed isolated sentences using words provided. They also did spelling tasks and other such basic exercises. As may be seen in the work pieces in figure 8.5, one interesting feature was the copying of notes. While the policy documents required learners to write 'own news, creative story, description of an incident/experiment' (DBE, 2011e), this could only be possible if they were given opportunities to practice and function with literacy. As such literacy was constructed basically as skills for use in answering questions and not self-expression, creativity, thinking, recreation and beyond.

The amount of written work given to learners appeared to be affected by the teacher pupil ratios at Nellus (1: 69). However, the case of teacher-pupil ratio did not apply to Kolo where ratios were 1:39. Evidence from children's exercise books showed that children were not given adequate opportunities to write and, where this was provided there was abundant evidence of the work not receiving adequate supervision and marking by teachers. In grade 3 the children generally wrote literacy and math everyday but the frequency took a significant turn in grade 4 when written work became sporadic. In one isolated case the children's English exercise books reflected that they had last written an exercise 16 days before being assigned the next written work. Even then, the second task was given before the earlier one had been marked. The teacher had absented herself from her lessons for the period in question. This finding relates to other research which queried the use of time in schools (Hoadley, 2003; Chisholm, 2005; Reeves et al, 2007). It was established that the teacher in question had not been absent for any reason during the period in question. As a literacy practice the timing of exercises and the nature of the feedback on learners had a bearing on the literacy habits learners developed. For learners at grade 4, not providing immediate feedback could cultivate negative tendencies.

Children capitalized on the delayed feedback and hardly worked seriously after they realized that there was laxity somewhere. Teachers seldom marked children's work critically. Children were given an average of 5 questions per exercise in grade 3, which increased to about 8 to 10 questions in grade 4. Since these were often short questions, the child often underlined the answer which then made it easy for the teacher to run straight to the underlined word, tick and go. Such tasks made marking easy for teachers at the expense of the development of literacy among learners. This, as I implied earlier, was to some extent a result of the skewed teacher-pupil ratios, particularly at Nellus.

Despite the efforts teachers said they put in their work, the quality did not appear to meet the standards stipulated in the assessment policy documents. There appeared to be a discrepancy between what policy documents said and the actual literacy skills, practices and affordances that children actually displayed in their written work. There appeared to be a mismatch between the actual physical work learners produced and what policy documents stipulated. Close analyses of the samples of work above clearly portrays this. Penmanship skills, grammatical skills, discourse construction, sequence/chronology, the nature of literacy events and other issues pointed to a system whose standards required revamping in the two schools under this study.

The written work by learners was also analysed in terms of the purposes for writing. The major purposes for writing appeared to be the development of literacy skills, to consolidate concepts taught, to assess the level of conception and to teach. However, a new development that appeared common to grade 4 writing across subjects was the writing of 'notes.' An example of the absence of systematic literacy practices is what was written on the board for learners to copy down in their exercise books as notes to the grade 4 class at Kolo in EMS on the 27th of January 2012. The work was as follows:

> Notes
>
> Economics is about the flow of money. People who make things or provide *service (producers)* sell *goods* and *services* to people who *need* or *want* them *(consumers)*. When they sell the *goods* and *services*, money is *exchanged*. *Producers* use this money to *keep their businesses going*. Money flows *continuously* in a *cycle* between *producers* and *consumers*. We call this the *economic cycle*. Government gets money from *taxes* on *salaries* and other *levies*.

The words italicized reflect those words that I regarded to be of high cognitive demand (Adler, et al, 2002; Ensor, 2009; Hoadley, 2008) while the paragraph depicts text of high semantic density

(Ensor, 2009). High semantic density refers to the distribution or concentration of words that are specialized in a text. In other words the more specialized the text, and the more concentrated the period of time across which the text is distributed, the higher the semantic density. Their concentration speaks to the effect that poor grasp of language (Reeves et.al, 2008), particularly vocabulary, could have adverse implications on a child's learning.

This passage was given to learners as lesson notes for the day and thus constituted the day's writing task. From the interaction with both the teacher and the learners, not much was learnt through this lesson other than copying skills. This literacy event also relates to queries on the use of time and pacing in schools (Ensor, 2002; Schollar, 2008; Hoadley, 2003; Chisholm et.al, 2005). Even then, the lesson ended with most learners struggling to copy the large number of unfamiliar words in the passage. This was read from the number of times it took a child to look up a word before they completed copying it down. Thulani, one of the bright learners, looked up the word 'producer' three times before he could finish copying it down. Given that this task was learnt on the 27th January 2012, at about the week serious learning had commenced, it confirmed the fears that grade 4 was 'hard' that nearly all the learners had brought from the foundation phase.

While the use of notes in teaching makes sense in situations where resources are inadequate, consideration needs to be given to the circumstances, level, age and learning habits of the learners. Where textbooks were available in fair numbers, the pedagogical value of the practice became questionable.

The procedure for writing in the two schools at grade 3 and 4 levels was instructive of the practices and procedural habits learners acquired as they wrote. In some classes the routine is for

the learners to write the day of the week, date in full, topic immediately below and first practice handwriting with one or two letters of the alphabet, in both uppercase and lowercase, as warm-up for the actual writing task. This also served as a reminder to the child that letters shall be in capitals and lowercase during sentence construction. The child is also expected to underline neatly the day, date and topic using a ruler.

This practice did not appear to be followed in both schools. There did not appear to be a procedure for writing that clearly specified what should be done. In the end each class appeared to have its own procedure. The different literacy practices reflect the different ways in which literacy is constructed across schools and classrooms. While grade 3s at Nellus wrote topics such as 'writing' every day when they did an exercise, the next door class specified the actual topic of the day such as 'punctuation'. Here they didn't need to write the date in full. They wrote '21.02.2011' and proceeded to the topic of the day. In Kolo the procedure was also different but two of the grade 3 classes used similar formats. The implication of the different systems was that it became difficult to pin down what the correct and standard practice was or could be for either the school or the district, leaving each teacher to do as their own teachers did when they were learners themselves.

The system appeared to take a shift at grade 4 when different teachers began to demand some form of uniformity when children wrote. The redistribution of classes I discussed earlier in this chapter had in effect also redistributed the different writing practices used by the different classes. Similarly, the procedure when one made a mistake during writing did not appear very clear among pupils in the two schools. While they could cancel (scratch) in some cases, there were numerous cases of smudging, use of parenthesis, underlining and erasures. The different literacy practices also reflected the different conceptions of literacy among teachers and how

they thought it should be taught to learners. Below is the work of Kamogelo whom the grade 4

English teacher had mistakenly diagnosed as dyslexic[15].
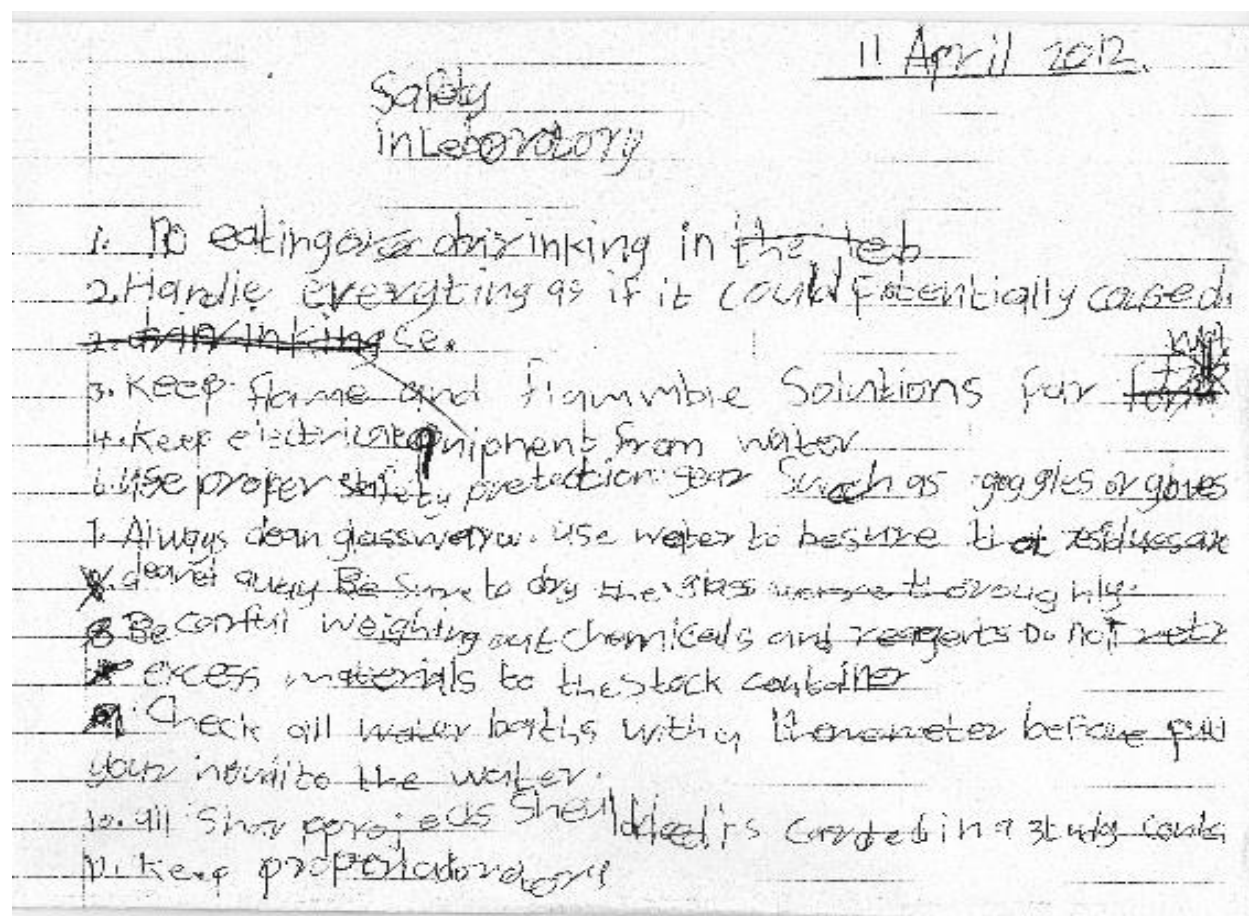
The teacher's mistaken prognosis relates to other studies (Spaull, 2013; Jansen, 1999b; Reeves,

2008) that questioned teacher competence in schools and its implications for the learners. It also

speaks to the different expectations between foundation phase teachers and intermediate teachers

in terms of learners' literacy. Discussion with the learner, coupled with the individualized

practice showed that the boy had a tendency not to take things seriously (a shorter concentration

span coupled with a poor literacy habits and practices) and would thus just work to fulfill a

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[15] The teacher appeared unaware of the symptoms of this condition but was merely profiling the learner without due diligence.

requirement before resorting to, maybe, play or other things. The following factors were evident in the learner's English exercise book:

a). The exercise book, like all other exercise books in the class on March 2, 2012 had last been marked by the teacher on January 27, 2012. This meant that for over a month of schooling the learner had not received real feedback/attention from the teacher. When learners do not receive immediate feedback, and are aware of the laxities among teachers, the potential result is negligence and sloppiness by learners.

b). There were punctuation errors in the manner the learner wrote the date that had gone uncorrected for a long time. The learner began the month with small letters.

c). The learner wrote his school work all the time that work was assigned. On comparing his exercise book with those of the rest of the class it was proven that he had not missed any written exercise in English, although his answers were incorrect some of the times.

d). His exercise books, including the English one, were very clean on the outside. This was also evident in his written work that hardly had any cancellations, smudges or rubbing. This was read to mean a reasonable sense of hygiene and concern for his school work and books.

e). The learner had problems with following the lines when writing. The social record the grade 3 teacher had did not mention that the learner had any problems with his vision. The child also indicated he could see properly.

The young boy needed to see purpose and connect the activity of writing to his world so as to construct writing as an act of empowerment (Freire, 2001). He needed conscientious, individualized attention and feedback. There were ample signs to show he could do well if

attended to. Simple individualized practice with this researcher in three 10 minute sessions saw improved literacy and handwriting of the learner. The condition of the above student's work reflects the performance slump that occurs in grade 4 as learners grapple with issues of transition. The poor writing skills and lack of concentration was read as a consequence of the myriad of challenges, confusion, anxiety and frustration with a system that appeared unfussed with what learners were undergoing at that time. As such some learners appeared to resign by showing little concern for their work.

In another literacy event a math teacher was sweating to make learners understand addition of two or more digit numbers by demonstrating the examples on a chalkboard that had no boxes drawn on it. She explained that Maths and Science were a problem in South Africa. When I registered objection to it she appeared to surmise that it was the general academic habit of scholars to want to differ. I then offered to advise her on a way of teaching in which she would use the board as an exercise book (with square boxes) and emphasize the arrangement of numbers in hundreds, tens, and units accordingly. I then went on to offer to deliver the same lesson as I had explained to her. She thanked me genuinely and we became professionally close thereafter.

		5	6	7	
	†	6	8	4	
	1	2	5	1	

By positioning the digits properly in boxes, units over units, tens over tens, and hundreds over hundreds a seemingly difficult concept became suddenly easy to the learners. Before there were lines on the chalkboard what the teacher was doing on the board did not relate to what they had

in their exercise books. The teacher did not realize the complexity brought about by using a plain board. As a result learners could write more than one digit in a maths box (an extreme case was a child writing four digits in one box), resulting in them mixing units and tens and so on. The teacher appeared to be taking things for granted that adding or subtracting was easy and, hence disregarded issues of procedure, sequencing, ordering and so on. Once these concepts were emphasized the addition problem was solved. I then advised the teacher to make sure children write one digit in each box at all times whether during addition, subtraction or whatever mathematical topic they may deal with in future. Such a practice would best begin with her chalkboard work. The result was neater work, easier problem solving and love of the subject.

8.6 Conclusion

The literacy events I described in this chapter stand to show the complex issues that occur in grade 4 as learners move along their literacy journeys. When the transitional challenges discussed in this chapter are compounded by poor teaching and inconsistent literacy practices, some learners end up losing interest, resigning themselves to their fate and developing negative attitudes to schooling. When learners' fears and confusion are confirmed through different subjects in their curriculum, the result is the feeling that problems are not with specific subjects but rather the grade itself. Such negative attitudes are evident through a decline in learner performance. Unfortunately such decline appears not to be foregrounded by grade 4 teachers since they do not know the literacy histories of their learners (see class re-distribution system earlier in this chapter). As such, learners have to be consistently exposed to appropriate literacy habits in order for them to imbibe them as every day social practices. If this is not so, the result is a lull in literacy development in grade 4. If handwriting automaticity is not habituated at the

appropriate level in grade 3, learners' progress will be significantly affected in grade 4 where such basic literacy skills are assumed to be in their possession.

When work becomes hard from the outset in grade 4, this has an effect on learners' identity with this grade. What gets lost is the learner. As such the first month of grade 4 is critical in ensuring that learners settle well in that grade. In the case of the two schools in this study, their fears were confirmed. Grade 4 became really hard not because learners lacked appropriate literacies but largely because composite factors at play militated against their circumstances. The ecology of factors got lost when learners got to grade 4. Things did not work together for their good from too many fronts, thus making transition difficult. As such the success of transition appeared to depend more on capital available in other systems learners had access to other than the meso and the microsystems.

Chapter 9: Conclusions and Recommendations

9.1 Introduction

This study investigates transitional literacy experiences of grade 3 learners as they moved to grade 4 in two primary schools. The movement sees many complex changes that include restructuring of the curriculum, systemic adjustments, curriculum change, change of the language of instruction, and academic as well as psychological adjustments. These issues impact on learners in both negative and positive ways.

Because of the history of education in South Africa whose effects have had far reaching consequences to date, the study frames transition as embedded in multiple contexts and impinged upon by multiple factors. South African education has been in flux for some time. After 1994 there was an effort to align the multiple curricula of the apartheid era into one curriculum for all. Several changes to the school curriculum were made in the past but none of these appeared to 'fix' the problems in education. One such curriculum change was the movement from NCS to CAPS. This study capitalised on that moment in time when the complexities of transition from one educational phase to another coincided with a curriculum policy change from the NCS to the CAPS of 2011 through 2012. While transition often comes with complex changes, shifts and adjustments on the part of the stakeholders, when it coincides with curriculum change in a multilingual society there are increased challenges for teachers and learners.

The study sought to establish the literacy challenges confronted by learners in transition as the academic, cognitive and curriculum demands increased from grade 3 to 4. In doing so the study posed four critical questions. The first question sought to establish if reading and writing learnt in the foundation phase adequately prepared learners for the academic and cognitive demands of the intermediate phase. The second and third questions sought to investigate the strategies used

by learners and teachers to negotiate the transition and how those strategies could be understood and explained in relation to the increasing academic and cognitive demands of the literacy curriculum. The fourth question probed the role of language during transition in terms of the extent to which it impacted the transition process.

In order to interrogate the issues in this study I used Bronfenbrenner's (2005) ecological systems model as the theoretical framework for the study. The theory advocates seamless systems that work together, in time, for transition to be successful. I considered aspects of transition at the macrosystemic level (with a focus on policy), the exosystemic (focusing on the influence of the home and community) level, the mesosystemic (internal schoolwide) level and the microsystemic level (focusing on the classroom). Because of the focus on literacy I used the ecological systems theory and a sociocultural approach to literacy. The sociocultural approach to literacy helped in contextualising the different conceptions teachers had of literacy and how such constructions influenced pedagogies. The two theories proffered complementarities that ensured a comprehensive consideration of issues that found reflection throughout the study.

When considering data in this study globally, what emerged clearly was that unless transition is carefully planned and handled, learners would find the foundation to intermediate phase transition challenging because of the multiple and complex factors that militate against a smooth transition. The consequence was a decline (August, 2002; Braund and Holmes, 2003) in the performance of the learners.

This chapter summarizes the findings of the study and proffers recommendations for further research and development in the light of those findings. The chapter also outlines the contributions this study made to the two case schools and how the study impacted practices that

enhanced transition from foundation to intermediate phases. The study contributes to our current understanding of transitional literacy in the kinds of schools in which the study was undertaken.

9.2 Summary of findings

One way of looking at the findings in this study is to classify them along the lines of Bronfenbrenner's (2005) systemic model. Data in this study was categorized in terms of its locations in the macro to micro systems. This section follows the same pattern in summarizing the findings.

9.2.1 Macro issues

There are many complex macro systemic issues that impact on education at the local level. While this study did not investigate these exhaustively, their effects impacted the schools in multiple ways. Bureaucratic practices, administrative and managerial issues in education that have a bearing on how schools operate were acknowledged in this study and affected the way teachers taught and learners learnt in the classroom.

At a macro level curriculum change was a major factor in what happened to learners at the micro level. Changes in the curriculum from the NCS to CAPS in 2011 and 2012 affected teachers psychologically in terms of their attitude and identity in the change equation; intellectually in terms of the lack of knowledge of the changes that were coming; and pedagogically in terms of the conceptions of literacy that accompanied the new curriculum. Teachers did not buy into the changes to the curriculum. Teachers felt excluded on matters that directly impacted their identities as professionals and their confidence levels were compromised. If teachers feel overwhelmed and do not understand what they are supposed to teach, then this impacts on poor

curriculum delivery. The net effect of this flux was poor practices in the classroom that had a knock on effect on learners' literacy and transitional adjustment when they moved to grade 4.

This study established some discrepancies in the interpretations of the language in education policy (DoE, 1997) in the two schools. Language finds reflection in this study in two ways; at the macro level in terms of the interpretations of the language in education policy and also at meso and micro levels in terms of policy application in the multilingual schools and classrooms where teaching took place. Because of this interlink, I deal with the language issue at meso level.

9.2.2 Exo level findings

Teachers in this study reported that their work was complicated by demands and directives from the district office. Teachers felt that lesson plans that the district office insisted that they follow did not take the realities of their classrooms into consideration. The result was lesson plans that had tasks that were either too difficult for the learners or premised on situations learners and teachers were unfamiliar with. In an effort to comply with district office requirements, teachers sometimes lost the learners in their teaching. The learners' understanding of concepts taught was compromised. This is problematic particularly with reading because learners do not make the necessary transition from learning to read to reading to learn.

While it might be tempting to think that much of what children learn happens in class, this study established that parents and family members as well as peers play a direct and pivotal role in literacy learning. 85% of learners in this study sought solutions from the exosystem for their microsystemic challenges such as reading and writing. Learners reported that many of their literacy skills were sharpened by parents and siblings at home and rarely mentioned teachers for their literacy skills accomplishments. In this way, the exosystem became a strategic buffer for the

challenges of schooling. It then raises questions about those children whose homes are not supportive, or whose situations are precarious in terms of their continued engagement with school, the psychological impact, and their ability to become literate so as to engage fully in society.

9.2.3 Meso level finding

Transition from the foundation to the intermediate phase, particularly, is a complex process that teachers need to understand and act upon. Transition occurs in different forms at the interface of grades 3 and 4. These vary from systemic, curriculum, academic, psychological, language factors to structural transitions. The way these factors converge in grade 4 is such that learners have to be adequately and continually prepared for the challenges that confront them as they transition into grade 4. Nearly everything takes on a new dimension in grade 4. While completely new information/concepts/subject matter appeared, the familiar also tended to change form. Some recognition of these factors would have helped learners deal with the multifaceted dimensions and volumes of new or different subject matter. An ecological approach to teaching in which teachers communicate regularly to learners and among themselves about the pedagogical approaches and literacy welfare of their learners was mostly absent in these two schools. This has to do with long term issues about status and construction of foundation phase teachers, understanding of children and their needs, as well as the presence or absence of functioning administrative systems in schools.

When curriculum change is brought into the mix, transition becomes quite a complex issue. In the end, the whole school system became disjointed and confusing to both teachers and learners. Bronfenbrenner (2005) advocates a seamless, ecological transition in which all stakeholders

work together, and in the same direction, to ease the burden of transition on learners and teachers. If issues of transition are not adequately dealt with, there remains a danger of some learners losing so much they won't catch up again. This study shows what this loss looks like at a pivotal moment.

Children's social, linguistic and academic circumstances appeared to be exacerbated by practices that were inimical to a smooth transition. This study established that communication between phase teachers and also between grades within phases was poor and led to different expectations for learners between teachers across grades and phases. Also, the way learning resources were kept rather than used was inimical to literacy development. Text books were locked up in storerooms in one of the schools on the pretext of awaiting the construction of a library.

This study established some evidence of dysfunction in the two schools. Good teaching practices advocate the consideration, discussion and monitoring by teachers of individual learners to ensure effective learning takes place. Teachers did not meet regularly to discuss individual learners' cases. After such meetings teachers generally implement agreed strategies and report on progress in succeeding meetings. In functional schools such meetings are done at grade level, often chaired by the senior teacher or the HOD of the department. When learners move to the next grade the teachers meet to discuss the class and also identify special cases and the options for necessary assistance. The administrative arrangements are made, records of children are exchanged and files moved on. These practices were not clear in the two schools. Consequently, time tables were not available early enough at the beginning of the year, and the increased number of subjects in grade 4 and the effect this has on time and timing, structure of classes (an example of the macrosystem impacting on the mesosystem), and other changes were not explained explicitly to learners.

The administrative processes are crucial and must be accessed by intermediate teachers when children make the transition to the intermediate phase, over and above the conversational mediation that should occur. In such instances both the former teacher and the new teacher would be aware of the situation of each learner at any given point in time. Meetings are held to discuss new developments, hand over and takeover of classes and to raise transitional issues that prepare the new teacher(s) of the task ahead. When such systems are absent, continuity is lost and with it learners are likely to get lost as well. The results in this study were learners and teachers who knew very little about one another in grade 4. This lack of communication and knowledge, not only of one another as teachers but also of children as literate subjects, and including knowledge of what happens across and within phases, militated against the smooth transition for both teachers and learners.

At the meso level the choices of the languages of instruction in the foundation phase as well as the variables in language complexity between grade 3 and 4 widened the gap between these grades. Grade 4 ushered in a new phase where most of the curriculum and its packaging became new, demanding literacy skills learners did not have as well as an English proficiency grade 3 had inadequately equipped learners for. The teachers appeared to have little knowledge of teaching the transfer of literacies learners had learnt through vernacular languages. As a result there was confusion, frustration and anxiety for both teachers and learners.

The languages of learning and teaching chosen by schools affected, in different respects, the ways teaching and learning took place in the two schools. Some children did not have home language proficiency to support school LOLTs. There is little structural and semantic relationship between English and isiZulu/Sepedi. While the vernacular-to-English approach at Kolo compromised the learners' English literacy in grade 4, those at Nellus were affected

through learning literacy at a FAL level without home language support. Language alone, as the vehicle for literacy and numeracy, became a huge factor in determining success or failure in grade 4 onwards. When literacy is accessed through a second, third or fourth language, a smooth transition is a challenge. Such language choices and literacy practices exposed the discrepancy between what policies and curriculum statements advocated and what occurred on the ground. In the end children found themselves with neither adequate language with which to access the curriculum nor knowledge of basic literacy skills to facilitate transfer of literacy skills.

An interesting finding is that learners taught through English from grade 1 exhibited better literacy skills and adjustment than those taught through isiZulu and Sepedi. The differences between English on one hand and isiZulu and Sepedi on the other made English literacy learning harder for those learners who had learnt literacy through vernacular languages throughout the foundation phase. When literacy is taught through vernacular languages and abruptly switched to English in grade 4 without the support of other factors (teacher quality, resources, historical factors, etc.) in the learning equation, literacy learning becomes harder.

9.2.4 Micro level issues

Some of the literacy events in the classrooms showed that teachers' proficiency in English was inadequate to empower them to teach through it. This was aggravated by literacy resources that were not appropriate for the literacy levels of the learners.

The microsystem of the grade 4 classroom rendered access to concepts difficult for learners across the curriculum. The disappearance of environmental print in grade 4, which had supported learners' literacy learning in grade 3 through a readily available and accessible resource; changes in subject teachers, timetabling, an increase in higher order concepts, limited access to resources

due to management practices, regulated and controlled reading and a different writing system (cursive), all militated against smooth transition to the intermediate phase in complex ways. The change in reading practices from reading aloud (communal) to silent (independent) reading between grade 3 and 4 as well as between reading aloud in class and silent reading practices during tests (such as the ANAs) caused dislocation. These inconsistencies marked the different ways the two grades constructed literacy which confused learners.

Meaning making strategies in vocabulary changed from rigid dictionary meanings to context dependent meanings and subject specific registers. Reading became a set of composite skills rather than discrete units of knowledge. Writing became more expository and required multiple skills rather than isolated skills. The rift between grade 3 and 4 became wide both in content and strategies for both teaching and learning. In the end learners did not have the literacy skills and English competence to meet those academic demands and pedagogical shifts. This led learners on one hand to devise strategies to cushion the effects of transition such as untidiness, selective writing and incomplete work, while on the other hand teachers resorted to methods and strategies of brokering (Mozak, 2006; Perry, 2009) literacy development that made work easier for themselves without due regard for the cognitive literacy value of such practices. Written work given to learners was not generative enough to allow learners to construct new, novel and unrehearsed subject matter but rather true or false items, fill ins, copying and so on that made marking easy for teachers. Cursive writing was not introduced in grade 3 and reading vocabulary, fluency and comprehension was inadequate for the academic and cognitive demands of the intermediate phase. In a nut shell, the learners did not have the literacy resources to enable them negotiate the transition to the intermediate phase.

Grade 3 learners approached grade 4 transition with a sense of fear and the impression that grade 4 was going to be hard for them. The ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner and Morris, 1998) states that things work well when all the factors come together in harmony and at the same time. Also, transition challenges are lessened when information is adequately and constantly made available in time. Learners in this study doubted their own literacy competency. The fear was compounded by parents and siblings who appeared to confirm that challenges lay ahead. The increased number of subjects and corresponding exercise books, many teachers, textbooks (heavy baggage), and structuring (time tables) of the curriculum and different LOLT appeared to confirm the challenges too. With neither adequate preparation for transition nor information about what lay ahead, learners approached grade 4 with a sense of apprehension, confusion, anxiety, frustration, ambivalence and fear that rendered them vulnerable to grade 4 material.

Learners adopted survival strategies to mitigate the challenges of transition. Untidiness surfaced as a consequence of frustration and confusion. They gave priority to work in those subjects where teachers followed up on their work, reserving that of other teachers for last. Teachers who did not give immediate feedback often had their work not done. As a consequence, most of the children's work slumped in terms of quality of handwriting, accuracy of answers and meaning. These surface features indicated some complex issues that lay beneath which learners had to deal with. As a result of those deep seated issues, learners resorted to the home as the source of literacy learning in order to buffer the hardships of schooling.

9.3 Recommendations

Recommendations emanating from this study could be looked at from several levels. In line with the research design one way to look at the study is to consider recommendations at macro, exo,

meso and micro levels. This means looking at recommendations at policy, research, school and classroom levels respectively. Below is an overview of some aspects of these categories in line with both the research questions in this study and the data that answered those questions.

9.3.1 Macro level

At the macro level this study found that curriculum change was a major factor in what happened to teachers and learners in this study. Curriculum change left teachers confused, frustrated and unaware of what was expected of them in their own jobs. One of the reasons for such despondency was the fact that information was getting to teachers late and conflated with new innovations. Curriculum planners may want to plan carefully and communicate curriculum change information in much better ways. Dissemination and diffusion of curriculum change information, resources and methods to teachers and learners left teachers with huge criticisms of workshops and training methods. Authorities may also want to explore other ways by which curriculum and professional development may be communicated. Equally important were the times for such training and workshops. Engaging stakeholders in planning for such interventions could encourage teacher buy-in.

Transition from the foundation to the intermediate phase is a complex process that teachers should seriously understand and act upon. It would appear that learners are in a delicate psychological state when they move across phases and grades. As such, the early period of transition should be carefully managed and handled until learners have fully settled in their new grade. On reaching grade 4 transitions occur in different forms and on many fronts. The cultures and practices of the two phases are significantly different to cause suspicion and panic to children. These vary from systemic, curriculum, academic, psychological, language and even

structural transitions. The way issues converge in grade 4 is such that learners have to be adequately and continually prepared for the challenges that confront them on changing phases. Nearly everything takes a new dimension in grade 4. While completely new information/concepts/matter appears, the familiar tends to change form. Hence planning and practice are required to help learners deal with the multifaceted dimensions and volumes of new or different subject matter the learners meet.

This study set out to, among other things, establish how teachers and learners deal with the phenomenon of transition. Teacher quality is an integral issue in transition. Limited subject matter knowledge among some teachers is a matter of concern that requires in-service training and staff development in schools. Teachers are the reality definers in schools whose influence on learner literacy, language use and content knowledge should be beyond doubt. The result of some teachers having insufficient content knowledge was reflected through learners whose reading and writing literacies were below the expectations of their grades. When curriculum change is brought into the mix, transition becomes quite a complex issue. The gap between phases can be narrowed by attending to multiple factors of our education to enhance a well lubricated system whose different parts work in unity with each other. Bronfenbrenner (2005) advocates a seamless, ecological transition in which all stakeholders work together, and in the same direction, to ease the burden of transition on learners and teachers. If issues of transition are not adequately dealt with there remains a danger of some learners losing so much they won't catch up again.

9.3.2 Exo level

This study was carried out in a multilingual community. Multilingualism is a resource that teachers should capitalise on. Researchers may find it interesting to explore multilingual strategies to harness the rich linguistic resources that come with the multiple languages learners come to school with. A multilingual pedagogy would be a plausible option in multilingual societies such as the one where this study was undertaken. Language alone has significant influence on what goes on in grade 4. The choice of the language of instruction is a critical issue which school governing bodies cannot relegate to a once-off affair. Due to changing demographics in urban areas, it may be necessary for schools to periodically examine and make decisions on the language situations of their schools in a democratic and sensitive manner.

The study found the teachers in the schools had inadequate knowledge in some aspects of their job. This inadequate knowledge may be a result of many other factors that were outside the purview of this study. However, when teacher quality and commitment to duty are not addressed this has an effect on literacy and transition. Authorities may need to consider in-house staff development sessions in schools to assist in empowering teachers to improve in their practice. The other dimension to this issue was the lack of teacher agency in reading materials afforded to them on their own in order to learn about curriculum changes. These reflected unhealthy levels of despondency that policy makers and curriculum planners may need to consider when looking at matters relating to the empowerment of teachers.

9.3.3 Meso-level

This study focused on the foundation to intermediate phase transition. Given the complexity of transition, it may be necessary to also investigate other transition points such as the grades R to 1, intermediate to senior phase, primary to secondary school and so on. Further studies could also

examine the phenomenon in other school types, areas outside of Gauteng, with different research designs and so on. It would be interesting to examine adjustment levels of the same learners, through tracer studies and across different transition points, the progress learners in this study make in their journey as well as understanding how factors discussed in this study play out in other schools in South Africa and elsewhere.

Schools may want to consider creating environments that enable smooth transitions. Teachers could assist by narrowing the gaps between grade 3 and 4 through guidance and counselling, information sharing, mentoring their learners and showing commitment to changing/improving the situations of learners. There is a body of international literature that shows how schools take this up. But this cannot be another policy expectation in schools. The functionality of schools and the psychological state of teachers needs to be addressed. Teachers who feel overwhelmed by a system are not likely to manage the wellbeing of children in this form.

In schools in this study subject specialization began in grade 4. While subject specialization in itself is sound, bringing it down to grade 4 appeared to complicate learners' circumstances when teachers abrogated their responsibility to teach core literacy skills to learners. In the light of the well documented history of poor quality teachers in South Africa and the complex curriculum delivery issues in schools, this area requires further discussion, rethinking and research. One way of alleviating the effects of specialization could be to balance the advantages and disadvantages of specialization at this level and have no more than three teachers sharing grade 4 subjects per class. Cases where six to nine teachers walked into each classroom with nine different subjects clearly require a rethink. This suggestion would still hold even when subjects were reduced to six. Ideally, only two teachers may share the six subjects and teach with distinction if the teachers have adequate subject knowledge.

Transition may be cushioned by good teaching practices in the foundation phase. If the foundation phase programme meets the curriculum stipulations with regard to literacy, learners may find fewer challenges in grade 4. Authorities in schools may need to carefully plan and monitor the literacy competences learners leave grade 3 with as well as consider giving priority to grade 4 when allocating teachers. This would require levels of efficiency from departments, that are currently variable, and that require a macrosystemic change.

An ecological approach to teaching in which teachers communicate regularly to learners and amongst themselves on the pedagogical approaches and literacy welfare of their learners is necessary. With a straight-for-English approach to literacy being implemented at a FAL level and in a language dissimilar to learners' home languages on one hand, and a vernacular-to-English approach not preparing learners for the realities of grade 4 on the other, I advocate an approach where both vernacular languages and English are taught concurrently in the foundation phase, supporting one another in literacy learning for contexts like Gauteng where mother tongue instruction is complex.

There were issues of resource availability and management in this study which affected literacy practices in the two schools. Making literacy resources available to learners aids literacy learning. The tendency of keeping books away from learners scuttles this view. While safe keeping and storage is good, the purpose of books, texts and readers is in their use rather than storage. Teachers may need far more support in managing and using resources. This speaks to the complex issue of how a set of beliefs and practices about literacy resources that need to be shifted.

9.3.4 Micro-level

One of the ways in which we may construct literacy development is by looking at the relationship between the teacher and the learner. This study found that there was a sense of distrust between teachers and learners. Learners preferred to seek help for their literacy related problems from their neighbours or parents at home. Creating a sense of trust and a healthy atmosphere are fundamental to transition.

In the classroom teachers exhibited decontextualized, autonomous conceptions of literacy that see them teach literacy as a set of discrete skills with little or no emphasis on meaning making, expression of thought and organization of ideas. While it may be argued that the school system is autonomous in its design, emphasising particular habits, skills and practices (see the CAPS documents in terms of prescriptive approaches), teachers may construct literacy in ideological ways that are guided by the specific contexts in which they operate, the abilities of their learners and the resources available to them in developing the different literacies that would benefit their learners.

Teachers' attitudes towards their learners are critical in determining what goes on in the classroom. Their choices and conceptions of learners as literate beings are crucial. Teacher practices in the classroom did not seem to value the learners well enough as the most important client in their job. Rarely did the conversations between teachers focus on the professional and academic matters. The social and the personal appeared to gain credence over academic and professional issues. When the professional came to the fore, this was often characterized by complaints, criticism and derision. Such attitudes easily filtered down to the learners. The kinds of conversations teachers engage in when they are in informal meetings in the school premises is a critical area that may require further exploration and research.

Lesson plans prescribed by the district offices may not suit the specific circumstances of the learners and their classrooms. Learners who had learnt literacy through vernacular languages in grade 3 downwards were taught English through district designed lesson plans in grade 4. This caused dislocation between the desired literacy levels and the reality in the classroom. While the lesson plans ensured alignment across schools, the plans were immune to the specific circumstances and conditions of their recipients. Teachers and officials may want to explore these matters further for mutual benefit.

9.4 Contribution of the Research to the Case Schools

A qualitative researcher may not stand aloof from the issues he/she studies. He/she becomes embedded in the phenomenon he/she studies. I felt that ethically it was my responsibility to provide support to the schools if they asked for input. I gave demonstration lessons on teaching reading and teaching handwriting upon request by foundation phase teachers in one of the schools. I suggested teaching methods and strategies for dealing with smaller matters that would arise in both formal and informal conversations during the period of data collection. I also helped with marking in some isolated situations as well as engaged learners in situations where teachers did not attend lessons.

While observing an English reading fluency lesson at Kolo I noticed the teacher was struggling to impart fluency skills to the learners and offered to give an impromptu reading for fluency and comprehension lesson. The impromptu lesson culminated in a mini-workshop with other teachers on teaching reading. The mini workshop was an enlightening experience to teachers in which one of them commented that the best methods are the simple things we take for granted. To her, all that teachers struggle with was how best to read their own situations. This comment by the teacher points to two important issues. The first issue is that my presence in the schools over

extended periods of time generated trust, which in turn prompted teachers to seek answers to their situations from what they probably constructed as a non-threatening agent and they received help. This also points to a realization on the part of teachers that they needed to continually review and improve their pedagogical practices. An appetite for knowledge and improvement was rekindled in some teachers in a socially friendly and relaxed manner. Such availability of human capital and a relaxed atmosphere enhanced teacher buy in as opposed to the mode of workshops run by the Department of Basic Education.

The second issue was that transition and literacy began to find space in teacher conversations and teaching practices. This was unintentional and a result of my presence in the school conducting research on transition. Keeping transitional literacy on the agenda of conversations in the two case schools drew attention to this matter. There was a realisation, consciousness and enthusiasm about transition and literacy that also generated positivity, which in turn opens possibilities for further research and thinking about transition in schools. Coming from this study is new knowledge on thinking and researching transition as an important aspect of the educational journeys of learners.

By the end of data collection there was a clear realization among teachers that they could do something about transition and literacy. I was informed that transition strategies became an agenda item in one of the staff meetings at Nellus. Teachers were beginning to take action and incorporating advice on transitional issues to their learners during lessons. Even communication within and between phases had started as a result of keeping the subject alive within conversations. This raises questions about coordination and the smooth operation between systems. As discussed in chapter 4, I kept my involvement at a minimum and only acted upon request from staff.

This study opened up relations between the University of the Witwatersrand and the two schools, Kolo and Nellus. My presence in the schools over extended periods opened up possibilities for growth and an appetite for change and support that had got lost. Teachers began to engage academic matters pertaining to their own professional advancement as well. They sought information about prospects for vacancies to do postgraduate studies, short courses, training and workshops for their own advancement. I availed this information and extended invitations for training to the schools at large whenever training opportunities arose. The schools in turn extended invitations to the university to send more researchers to their schools to further the cooperation this study had initiated.

As an unintended consequence of this study communication between phases, grades and classes within the schools improved significantly due to interviews and conversations. By the time I left the research sites teachers had become aware of the phenomenon and were beginning to realize its effects on themselves and their learners. Conversation provokes action.

THE APPENDICES

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APPENDIX B: Interview Guide for Learners

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Appendix A: Observation Guide

Sub Questions	Observations	Comments/Remarks
1. What do pupils read and write, how much and how often? 2. How much time on task is given and spent? 3. Are the literacy expectations across grades and classes similar or different? 4. Is the amount of English learners have adequate for the discipline specific demands of the curriculum on the part of both teachers and pupils?		
1. What literacy experiences do pupils have during grade 3 and 4? 2. What do pupils do when they encounter a reading and writing challenge? 3. How do learners perform in the literacy experiences of their grade? 4. What differences and similarities do pupils find between the two grades in terms of reading and writing?		

1. What do teachers do to ensure learners progress smoothly or adapt easily in their respective grades? 2. Do teachers of grade 3 learners know what those in grade 4 are teaching and vice versa? 3. Do grade 3 and 4 teachers share expectations of learners' literacy competences? 4. What are teachers' interpretation of curriculum and pedagogical practices they use in their teaching?		
1. What is the school's interpretation of NCS and LiEP? 2. Is knowledge of the English language that learners and teachers have adequate for the discipline specific demands of the curriculum at grade 4? 3. What level of support is given to learners?		

Appendix B: Interview Guide for Learners

Code ………………

Learner Experiences of Reading

1. a). What do you read in the grade 4 (3) classroom?

   b). How many sentences can you read on one sitting?

   c). How often do you read?

   d). Do you find the time given to you to finish a piece of reading work enough or its too little most of the time?

   e). What do you do if you cannot finish reading?

   f). Do you think you are a good reader?

   g). And why do you say so?

   h). What can one do in order to read well? And why do you say so?

2. a). What do you write at grade 4 (3) level?

   b). How long can you write before you get tired or bored?

   c). How often do you write at school?

   d). Do you find the time given to you to finish a piece of written work enough or its too little most of the time?

   e). What do you do if you cannot finish writing?

   f). What do you think makes one a good writer?

   g). What can one do in order to write well?

   h). What do you enjoy writing about?

Reading and Writing Practices

3. a). What do you do if you cannot read a word?

    b). What do you do when you cannot read a sentence?

    c). Who do you ask if you do not know something while reading?

    d). And why that person you mentioned or why no one?

    e). When did you last read to the teacher? And to your parents?

    f). Do you think it is important to read to someone? And why/not?

    g). Is reading the same at home and at school?

    h). What do you read at home?

4. a). What do you do if you cannot spell a word properly?

    b). What do you do when you cannot write a sentence?

    c). Whom do you ask if you do not know something while writing?

    d). And why that person you mentioned or why no one?

    e). When did you last write for your parents?

    f). Do you think it is important to write to someone?

    g). Is writing the same at home and at school?

    h). What do you write at home?

Learner Experiences of the Transition (Grade 4 only)

5. a). How is grade 4 different from grade 3?

    b). What is done differently in grade 4 from the way you were doing things in grade 3?

    c). What differences do you find between the two grades in terms of reading?

    d). What differences do you find between the two grades in terms of writing?

    e). What things are you still doing the same way as you were doing in grade 3?

f). Did you find it easy when you started grade 4? And why/not?

g). What do you think teachers should do to make it easy when learners come from grade 3 and go to grade 4?

Thank you very much for the privilege and time I spent with you. I enjoyed talking to you and may want to talk to you on this topic again.

Appendix C: Interview Guide for teachers

Code …………..

Biographical Information

Grade taught ………… Where trained ………………………Qualification obtained…………..

Level trained for …………………. Teaching experience …………………

Experience of teaching transitional grades ………………. Preferred grade ……………………..

Teacher Experiences of Teaching Reading and Writing at Grades 3 and 4

1. a). What do learners read at the grade level you teach?

   b). How much reading is done at your grade?

   c). How often do learners read for themselves in class?

   d). How often do you read to the class?

   e). How much time on task do you give to learners for reading literacy?

   f). Is this time always adequate for learners?

   g). What do you do if learners cannot finish a reading task?

2. a). What do learners write at the grade level you teach?

   b). How much writing is done in that grade?

   c). How often do learners write literacy work in class?

   d). How often do you write on the board for the class?

   e). How much time on task do you give to learners for writing literacy?

   f). Is this time always adequate for learners?

   g). What do you do if learners cannot finish a writing task?

Different Grades, Different Skills

3. a). What kinds of things do you teach in reading and writing at your grade level?

   And why?

   b). What writing skills do you emphasise at the grade level you teach?

c). What are the literacy expectations for the grade you teach?

d). Do you think your literacy standards are the same as those of other teachers of your grade for their learners? Why/not?

e). Do you think the literacy expectations for grades 3 and 4 learners are similar or different? And why/not?

f). How do you think teachers must deal with those difference, if any?

g). What literacy challenges did you inherit in learners when you took over the class you teach?

Language and Learning across Grades

4. a). Do you think learners' knowledge of the English language is adequate for learning purposes?

    b). Is it adequate for the discipline specific demands of the curriculum? Why/not?

    Learner Experiences and Literacy Pedagogy

5. a). Do you consider the grade ahead when you plan for the grade you teach? If so, how?

    b). What do learners read and write in your grade?

6. a). What do your learners do when they encounter a reading and writing challenge?

    b). As a teacher what do you do when you are confronted by reading and writing challenges?

    c). What strategies do your learners use to confront their literacy challenges in general?

    d). Learners' performance generally drops at grade 4 level. How does this drop manifest itself at this school or in your class?

e). What differences and similarities do pupils find between grades 3 and 4 in terms of reading and writing?

Enhancing Transition

7. a). What do you do to ensure learners progress smoothly or adapt easily in your class?

b). Do you think there is discord between foundation and intermediate conceptions of literacy? Why/not?

c). Do teachers of grade 3 learners know what those in grade 4 are teaching and vice versa?

d). Do grade 3 and 4 teachers share expectations on learners' literacy?

e). What informs the curriculum and pedagogical practices you use in your teaching?

f). What may teachers do to ensure learners transition/move smoothly and settle easily from grade 3 to 4?

g). Do you think such transition is well managed in the school?

Language and Education

8. a). What is the school's interpretation of language in education policy?

b). Do you think learners leave grade 3 with adequate language to help use English as a medium of instruction at grade 4?

c). Do you think knowledge of the English language that learners and teachers have is adequate for the discipline specific demands of the curriculum?

Thank you very much for the privilege and time I spent with you. God bless.

Appendix D: Participants Information Sheet for Educators and Deputy Principals

Date …………………………….

Dear Sir/Madam

Re: Research into Transitional Literacy from Foundation to Intermediate Phases

My name is Juniel Matavire and I am a registered full time PhD student at the University of the Witwatersrand. My student number is 569814 and my supervisor is Dr Kerryn Dixon who is contactable on telephone number 011 717 3183.

I am carrying out a study on transitional literacy among grade 3 and 4 learners. I would like to understand the literacy experiences that learners have when they move from the foundation phase to the intermediate phase of the primary school. I would like to observe learners and their teachers between last term of 2011 and the first 3 terms of 2012, during lessons as they move from grade 3 to 4, interviewing them and seeing their learning documents such as textbooks, exercise books, school reports and class tests.

I will also wish to interview you on your views regarding this topic. The interviews will last no longer than 45 minutes. I may need to audio record these interviews so that I may transcribe them later. No foreseeable risks are involved in this study and if any may so arise, all efforts will be explored to ensure correction. In doing so, I will protect the identities of all participants (including you) by not revealing or including these in the research report. I will use pseudonyms to identify my participants. All data collected will be treated confidentially and will only be used for the purpose of this study.

I am inviting you to participate in interviews with you individually or in a group and within the school/classroom premises and at a time and date convenient to you.

Such participation is voluntary and no money or other incentives is involved. During the course of the study you may withdraw at any time if you so decide without the fear of any penalty, loss or consequences whatsoever. Please indicate your consent by signing the form below.

Yours faithfully

Juniel Matavire

Phone: 078 113 8987/072 272 2461

Research Consent Form for Educators and Deputy Principals

Interview Consent Form for Educators and Deputy Principals

Name of Educator/Deputy principal ………………………………………………………………………………..

Grade taught/Office   …………………………………………………………………………………...

I voluntarily grant my consent to be interviewed by Juniel Matavire for his study on transitional literacy in the primary school.

I understand that:

- Participation in this study is voluntary
- Interviews, will last approximately 45 minutes
- I may refuse to answer any questions I do not wish to answer
- I may withdraw from the study at any time
- No information that may identify me will be included in the research report and my responses will remain confidential

Signed ……………………………………………………………..   Date …………………………………

Audio Recording Consent Form for Educators and Deputy Principals

I voluntarily grant my consent to be audio recorded during interviews with Mr. Juniel Matavire for his study on transitional literacy in the primary school.

I understand that:

- Audio tapes will be destroyed within 5 years
- Interviews, will last approximately 45 minutes
- I may refuse to answer any questions I do not wish to answer
- No information that may identify me will be included in the research report and my responses will remain confidential

Signed ……………………………………………………………..   Date …………………………………

Appendix E: Research Information Sheet for Parents

Date …………………………………………..

Dear Parent

Re: Research into Transitional Literacy Experiences in the Primary School

My name is Juniel Matavire and I am a registered full time PhD student at the University of the Witwatersrand. My student number is 569814 and my supervisor is Dr Kerryn Dixon who is contactable on telephone number 011 717 3183.

I am carrying out a study on the reading and writing experiences of grade 3 and 4 learners. I want to understand what happens when children move from grade 3 to grade 4. I would like to spend some time observing your child's class, watching how the children learn and how the teachers teach. I would like to use their textbooks, exercise books, school reports and class test marks to compare with other children.

I expect the study to continue between the last term of 2011 and the first 3 terms of 2012. There is no foreseeable risk or discomfort whatsoever involved in this study. In the event of any discomfort I will do everything I possibly can to restore the comfort of the learner. I would also like to audio-tape the discussions I will have with the learners.

In doing so I will not write or use the names of the children in my notes or the research report. I will protect the identity or names of children involved by using pseudonyms and will only use the information I get for the purpose of this study.

I request your permission to involve your child in this study. The study will take place in the classroom. Only a selection of children will be involved and these will be selected on the basis of performance. Such participation is voluntary and no money or other incentives is involved. During the course of the study you may withdraw your child's participation any time if you so decide without penalty, loss or any effect whatsoever. You are hereby invited to indicate your permission by signing the form below.

Yours faithfully

Juniel Matavire

Phone: 078 113 8987/072 272 2461

Research Consent Form for Parents.

Observation Consent Form for Parents

Date sent   ....

Name of Child………

 I agree to have Mr Juniel Matavire see my child as s/he learns, see his/her exercise books, school report, tests and other school books and that these may be referred to in his thesis and research papers. I understand that the material will be used for research purposes only, and that only a selected number of children may be observed and interviewed.

I also allow the researcher to talk to my child in relation to the issues covered in this study.

I understand that:

- observation will not interfere with children's learning
- participation in this study is voluntary
- I can withdraw my child from the study at any time
- no information that may identify my child will be included in the research report and the child's answers will remain confidential

Name   of Parent …………………………………………………………………………………………………..

Signature ……

Date ……..

Interview Consent Form for Parents

I agree to have Mr Juniel Matavire interview my child, if s/he is selected for this purpose, on how s/he is progressing with school work. I understand that the information given by my child will only be used for research purposes.

I understand that:

- interviews will not interfere with children's learning
- interviews will last approximately 15-30 minutes
- my child may refuse to answer any questions s/he does not wish to answer
- I can withdraw my child from the study at any time

Name   of Parent …………………………………………………………………………………………………..

Signature ……

Date ……..

Audio Recording Consent Form for Parents

I agree to have Mr Juniel Matavire audio record my child during classroom observation and interviews, if s/he is selected for this purpose, about how s/he is progressing with school work. I understand that the information given by my child will only be used for research purposes.

I give permission for my child to be audio-recorded. I understand that my child will be told when s/he is being recorded.

Name of Parent ……………………………………………………………………………………..

Signature …………………………………………………………………………………………………

Date ……………………………………………………………………………………………………..

Appendix F: Research Permission Letter to Principals

University of the Witwatersrand

Department of Languages, Literacies and Literatures

Dear Sir/Madam

Re: Request to Undertake Research into Transitional Literacy Experiences of Learnersas they Move from the Foundation to Intermediate Phase

I write to request your permission to carry out a study on transitional literacy experiences of learners in reading and writing as they move from grade 3 and 4 in your school. The study is expected to explore the challenges and continuities between the foundation and intermediate phases of the primary school.

I am a registered PhD student at the University of Witwatersrand and my supervisor is Dr Kerryn Dixon who is contactable on telephone number 011 717 3183. I would like to observe selected learners, based on performance, and their teachers during lessons between the last term of 2011 and the third term of 2012, talking to them and seeing their learning documents such as textbooks, exercise books and class tests. Apart from observation and document analysis I also wish to interview the deputy principals, selected teachers and selected learners on the issues concerning transitional literacy.During interviews I may also need to audio tape the discussions I will have with them for closer analyses later.

The study is not expected to interfere with the day-to-day processes of the school or classes concerned. No foreseeable risks are involved in this study and if any may so arise, all efforts will be explored to ensure correction. In doing so, I will protect the identities of all participants by not revealing or including these in the research report and other literature. I will use pseudonyms to identify my participants. All data collected will be treated confidentially and will only be used for the purpose of this study.

Such participation is voluntary and no money or other incentives is involved. During the course of the study participants may withdraw at any time if they so decide without the fear of any penalty, loss or consequences whatsoever.

I hope you will grant this request.

Yours faithfully

Juniel Matavire

Phone: 078 113 8987/072 272 2461

Appendix G: Research Information Sheet for Educators to be observed

Date …………………………….

Dear Sir/Madam

Re: Research into Transitional Literacy from Foundation to Intermediate Phases

My name is Juniel Matavire and I am a registered PhD student at the University of the Witwatersrand. My student number is 569814 and my supervisor is Dr Kerryn Dixon who is contactable on telephone number 011 717 3183.

I am carrying out a study on the literacy experiences learners have in reading and writing as they move from grade 3 to grade 4. The study is expected to explore the challenges and continuities between the foundation and intermediate phases of the primary school. I would like to observe learners and their teachers between the last term of 2011 and the third term of 2012, during lessons as they move from grade 3 to 4, talking to them and seeing their learning documents such as textbooks, exercise books and class tests.

I wish to observe your class as you teach. I will also request to interview you on the issues of literacy at this level. I may also want to audio record the interviews with you and lessons I observe while you teach. No foreseeable risks are involved in this study and if any may so arise, all efforts will be explored to ensure correction. In doing so, I will protect the identities of all participants (including you) by not revealing or including these in the research report. Where necessary I will use pseudonyms to refer to participants. All data collected will be treated confidentially and will only be used for the purpose of this study.

I am inviting you to participate in this study in terms of classroom observation, interview with you individually within the school/classroom premises at the time and date convenient to you and to see your record of learner marks and the curriculum materials and textbooks you use in your practice.

Such participation is voluntary and no money or other incentives is involved. During the course of the study you may withdraw at any time if you so decide without the fear of any penalty, loss or consequences whatsoever. Please indicate your consent by signing the form below.

Yours faithfully

Juniel Matavire

Phone: 078 113 8987/ 072 272 2461

Research Consent Form for Educators to be Observed

Observation Consent Form

Name of Educator …………………………………………………………………………………..

Grade taught …………………………………………………………………………………....

I voluntarily grant my consent to be observed while teaching in class and have my curriculum materials, textbooks for my grade and other literature relating to my class accessed by Juniel Matavire for the study on transitional literacy in the primary school.

I understand that:

- I can withdraw from this study at any time without consequences
- no information that may identify me will be included in the research report and my responses will remain confidential
- I may be audio recorded during classroom observation
- The work will be presented in a thesis and academic publications and educational presentations

Signed …………………………………………………………….. 		Date ……………………………………

Interview Consent Form

Name of Educator …………………………………………………………………………………..

Grade taught …………………………………………………………………………………....

I voluntarily grant my consent to be interviewed by Mr. Juniel Matavire on transitional literacy in the primary school.

I understand that:

- I can refuse to answer any questions I do not wish to answer
- Interviews will last approximately 45 minutes

Signed …………………………………………………………….. 		Date ……………………………………

Audio Recording Consent Form

I voluntarily grant my consent to be audio taped during interviews and lesson observation by Mr. Juniel Matavire for the study on transitional literacy in the primary school.

I understand that:

- Audio tapes will be destroyed within 5 years
- I may be audio recorded during interviews and classroom observation
- At all times I will be informed if audio taping is to be done

Signed ………………………………………………………..   Date …………………………………

Appendix H: Learner Information Sheet

Date ………………………………………..

Dear my friend ....

Re: Request to Study How Learners Learn to Read and Write at Grade 3 and 4 in Your Class

My name is Juniel Matavire and I am a student at the University of the Witwatersrand. I am studying the reading and writing you do in grades 3 and 4. I want to understand how you find the differences between grade 3 and grade 4.

I would like to see your exercise books, school reports, sit in your class and observe you while learning and talk to you about your school work. I will only see a selection of exercise books and talk to some of you that I will choose depending on your performance. This will take up to three terms. I will only be with you for about two hours a day. We will learn and talk during learning times of the day and in the classroom. I would also want to tape record the discussions I will have with you so that I can listen to what you think at a later time.

I will not discuss your work or marks with other people. I will not write your name in my work. So, I will make sure that when I am in your class I do not disturb your learning. You can choose not to participate in this study because it does not affect your marks.

If you want us to learn together please write your name and sign on the forms below.

Yours faithfully

Juniel Matavire

Phone: 078 113 8987/072 272 2461
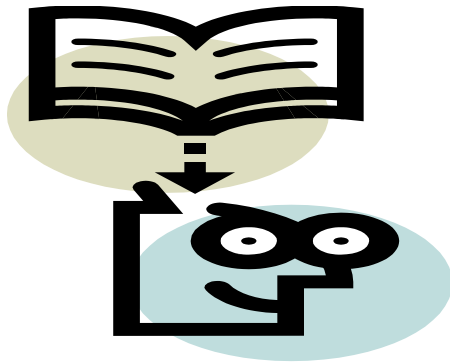
Learner Observation Consent Form

My name is   ……

I agree to have Mr Juniel Matavire in my class as I learn and to talk to me about how I learn.
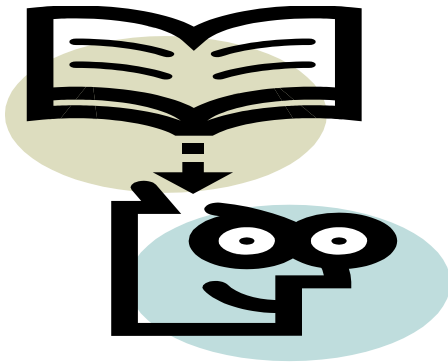
 I also agree that he can use what I say in class if he tapes me talking.

He can also see my exercise books, school report, tests and other school books.

I understand that he will not use my real name or tell other people about what he sees in my books. I also understand that he will tell me if I am selected on my performance for this study.

Signature   …………………………………………………………………………………………………

Date   …………………………………………………………………………………………….

Learner Interview Consent Form

My name is ……………………………………………………………………………………

I agree to talk to Mr Juniel Matavire in my classroom about how I learn to read and write if I am selected for his study. I also understand that he will tell me if I am selected on my performance for this study.
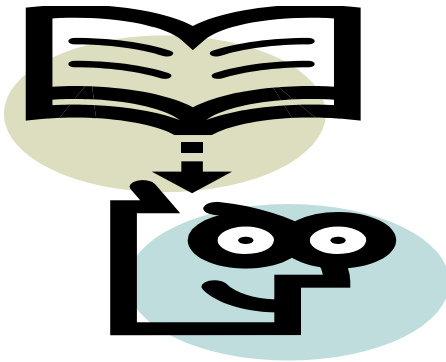
Signature …………………………………………………………………………………

Date   …………………………………………………………………………

Learner Audio Recording Consent Form

I agree to talk to Mr Juniel Matavire in my classroom about how I learn to read and write if I am selected. I also understand that he will tell me before recording what I say.

Signature …………………………………………………………………………………

Date   …………………………………………………………………………

Appendix J: Interview Guide for HOD's and Deputy Principals

Biographical Information

Position.........…………Where trained…………………Qualification ......…………..

Level trained for ………………….   Teaching experience ………………….......

Experience of teaching transitional grades ……………….....................................

Experience in present post…………..

Teacher Experiences of Teaching Reading and Writing at Grades 3 and 4

1. a). What kind of things do learners read at grade 3 level?

    b). How do they differ from what they read in grade 4?

    c). In your view do teachers give learners adequate opportunity to read for themselves in class?

    d). What challenges do you see teachers facing when teaching reading literacy at grade 3 and 4?

    e). In your view how may these challenges be addressed?

2.   a). What kind of things do learners write at grade 3 level?

    b). How do they differ from what they write in grade 4?

    c). In your view do teachers give learners adequate opportunity to write in class?

    d). What challenges do you see teachers facing when teaching writing literacy at grade 3 and 4?

    e). In your view how may these challenges be addressed?

Different Grades, Different Skills

3. a). What writing skills do you think must be emphasized at grade 3 level?

b). Do you see literacy standards expected by teachers being the same or different within particular grades for their learners? Why/not?

c). Do you think the literacy expectations for grades 3 and 4 learners are similar or different? And why/not?

d). How do you think teachers must deal with those differences, if any?

Language and Learning across Grades

4. a). Do you think language of instruction is a factor influencing learners' access to the curriculum, particularly at grade 4 level? If so why/not?

b). What other factors could affect children's learning at transitional level?

c). Literacy development generally drops when learners move from foundation to intermediate phase. Do you experience this phenomenon in this school?

Learner Experiences and Literacy Pedagogy

5. e). As an administrator, what strategies do you use to enhance smooth transition of learners from one grade to another?

Enhancing Transition

6. a). Do you think there is discord or a gap between foundation and intermediate conceptions of literacy? Why/not?

b). Do you think teachers of grade 3 know what those in grade 4 are teaching and vice versa?

c). Do grade 3 and 4 teachers share expectations on learners' literacy?

d). What may teachers do to ensure learners transition/move smoothly and settle easily from grade 3 to 4?

Language and Education

7. a). What is the school's interpretation of language in education policy?

   b). Do you think learners leave grade 3 with adequate language to help use English as a medium of instruction at grade 4?

   c). Do you think knowledge of the English language that learners and teachers have is adequate for the discipline specific demands of the curriculum?

   Thank you very much for the privilege and time I spent with you. God bless.

Appendix K: Data Analysis - Pedagogy and Strategy

Table Summary

A total of **112** lessons were observed and reported on. Of these, 41 were observed in grade 3 (19 and 22 at Nellus and Kolo respectively) between October and December 2011, while 71 were observed and reported on in grade 4 (39 and 32 respectively) between January and June 2012. The first three weeks' lessons for grade 4 in January and early February were disregarded to minimize the Hawthorn effect on teachers. However, the period was integral in understanding learner behaviours.

School Grade	Literacy Area/skill	Activity	Strategies (Pedagogies)	Notes and Reflections
Nellus Gr 3 (19 lessons)	Reading (8 lessons)	Reading for **Fluency** -use of reading games in which one had to read fluently without missing or misreading words. - direct teaching of fluency with special focus on speed, observing punctuation and intonation.	**Reading aloud** – word attack strategies, re-reading and prediction. This element was present in each of the 8 lessons. **Shared reading** – one learner reads a section of a passage while others finger-point the section being read. In 1 out of the 8 lessons learners take turns to read to each other in pairs. **Independent reading** – sporadic moments (Only in 2 lessons out of 8 were learners given opportunities to read silently to themselves. See Teacher – learner ratios and lessons 03.11.2011a +b).	Reading aloud from the text book *English for the new nation* done following after the teacher. There appears to be a relationship between fluency (quality of reading) and rate of comprehension. Learners taking turns to read a passage in readers from the *TreeTop* series The teacher here appears to construct the teaching of reading as meaning practising by reading aloud since the practice was prevalent.
		Reading for **Comprehension** -reading a passage several times and reinforcing with picture discussion, explanations and translation etc. See 22.11.2011	**Reading aloud** –guided chorus reading in which the whole class choruses sections of a passage after the Tr. See 03.11.2011; 17.11.2011 and 22.11.2011. **Shared reading** –use of context clues, prediction. Relating the pictures and the story in the text. See reader called *Bertha's Secret Battle* as read on 22.11.2011. **Group Reading** – thinking aloud and	Learners flipping the page late was a common feature Learners pretending to be reading by moving lips but actually not reading. Comprehension always often followed by written work.

			exposition followed by teacher retelling the story in vernacular languages.	
		Vocabulary -pre-teaching of vocabulary, picture graph discussion, exemplar reading Use of dictionaries to check word meanings	**Reading aloud** – after the teacher several times each new word. See 07.11.2011; 09.11.2011 and 15.11.2011. **Independent reading** – pronunciation and articulation. Each child had opportunity to check words in a dictionary since there were adequate dictionaries for each learner. Use of context clues and prediction to read and develop vocabulary.	Communal/chorus strategy followed by teacher expositions, translated to vernacular in all 3 lessons in which vocabulary featured prominently. This was always followed by some written work. Comment on the mismatch between the vocabulary in textbooks versus what teachers chose to teach in their lessons, with particular reference to 07.11.2011 and the home language assumption.
	Grammar (6 lessons)	-spelling -plural and singular -past and future tenses, pronouns, prepositions, possessives.	Independent writing Reading aloud Demonstration reading Guided discussion integrated strategy (anything goes) Communal reading strategy, sees 11.11.2011 and 22.11.2011.	No-method method where the gist of lessons is often lost. Combination of concepts. Often difficult to pin down the theme/central concern of lessons. Grammar rules are hardly explained. So learners are often just told the answer with little justification. It was difficult to identify isolates and socialites in these classes. There appears to be some obsession with grammar since it has a very high frequency in lessons with 6 out of 19 lessons.
	Writing	Handwriting (1 lesson) -cursive writing	**Demonstration** on pen handling, slant, shaping, book positioning and habituation. See Tuesday	Generally cursive writing was problematic to teachers and only one lesson was observed on

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			01.11.2011. **Copying** from one another and from a given source.	this grade in the school – probably neglected for grade 4. See discrepancy with curriculum demands for handwriting to be taught for 15 minutes every day versus the assertion that teachers had not been trained to teach handwriting in college. Relate this to issues of timing and samples of children's work. There was no evidence of handwriting lessons on days when the researcher was outside of these classes.
		Writing and Spelling of isolated words (done twice a week). -using punctuation marks -writing using prescribed conventions.	**Independent writing Peer monitoring and self-correction** (see 03.11.2011 towards the end of the report). **Referring back** to the text before answering a question vs answering from the head. **Cheating/Avoidance** – see a learner who continually puts full stops during written work until teacher passes on 11.11.2011.	Learners ask questions many times to show lack of clarity and understanding. Some just stare at the teacher as a way of showing that there is a problem. Learners deliberately missing exercise books if they did not complete the previous work.
	Listening and speaking (4 lessons)	Sentence construction using words on word cards. Filling in the missing word in written exercises. See 09.11.2011.	Chorusing Discussion Expositions/explanation One Storytelling event and one quiz competition.	Story of someone who could not speak good English and could missed a job. Playing a spelling and sentence construction quiz as a class. "I eat lunch once a day every morning," on 09.11.2011.
	Phonics (str- and scr-)	Word building through phonics, Spelling	Reading aloud (chorusing) of the phonic structures as a class. Independent work Communal strategy to establish correct letter-	Use of cards was prevalent in teaching phonics.

			sound correspondence	
Kolo Gr 3 (22 lessons)	Reading (8 lessons)	Reading for Fluency -vocabulary to be met in passages often taught before reading a passage for fluency.	Reading aloud after the teacher from the textbook *English for the new Nation* p15 on 23.11.2011. Also reading from readers *The Beehive Scheme 5 (Problem)* on 18.11.2011. Independent reading of words and passages from textbooks and word cards. Guided discussion followed by sentence construction immediately after reading for fluency.	Fluency lessons always integrated with comprehension or sentence construction lessons here. Finger pointing is emphasised here, often with faulty interpretation, see 18.11.2011 where someone who was reading aloud to the class was asked to hold the book with the right hand while pointing at the section he was reading with the left hand, resulting in reduction in reading speed. Word attack challenges among the majority of learners resulting in jerked reading.
		Comprehension	Reading aloud – chorusing or communal reading of large sections of text after the Tr for comprehension followed by explanations and discussions. See 23.11.2015. Shared reading of passages as learners take turns to read. Good readers read to slow/struggling readers. Re-telling a story read in own words and in translation	Use of pictures to support comprehension, see 23.11.2011. Comprehension is always followed by simple written work. Learners are often called to read in front of the class. Literal translation of story to vernacular languages occurs in all lessons. Teacher inadequacies in English language control see 23.11.2011. ***Learners share readers in groups of 3 learners per reader. Insufficient resources.***
		Vocabulary	Guided independent reading from word cards and readers. -word attack -predicting	Use of pictures, context clues, predicting and guessing is evident. Words are taught

			-guessing -re-reading	separately from the way they are used in sentences (no use of dictionaries or context).
	Writing (3 lessons)	Answering Provincial and District exemplar ANA (common) papers (3 lessons)	Explaining instructions prior to writing Reading aloud of the whole paper by the teacher prior to learners writing Reading 3 times prior to commencement of paper Reading aloud by learners	-learners not having ball point pens -code switching during explanations --"learners are not used to silent reading", teacher's comment on 10.11.2011 after learners start vocalizing text in question papers. Learners required extended time to write work. Learners ask questions even during tests "Learners would pass better an oral test than a written one" teacher on 10.11.2011. Only 17 out of 39 finish in regulation time.
		Handwriting (no lesson dedicated to handwriting but integrated in other lessons).	integrated in everyday writing	Hardly taught despite transition to use of ball points and cursive. At Kolo there wasn't any emphasis on cursive during grade 3.
	Grammar (9 lessons)	The present (2), past (2) and future tenses (2). -articles (1) and pronouns (2).	Reading aloud Independent reading Shared reading Group/Communal reading	The pedagogy is often mixed up and unclear. -Evidence of poor planning and overdependence on pre-prepared GPLMS plans (see 10.11.2011 B2 Ms Thula).
	Phonics (2 lessons)	Word building, onsets and rimes Br-, dr- and gr-.	Reading aloud Communal/group strategies Independent work	Basic phonics still being taught

Grade 4 Analysis (71 Lessons: 39 and 32 for Nellus and Kolo respectively)

School Grade	Literacy Area/Skill	Activity/Pedagogy	Strategies	Notes and Reflections
Nellus	Reading (22	Reading for	Independent silent	Less chorusing and

Gr 4 (39 Lesson)	lessons)	**Comprehension** (see typical lesson on 02.03.2012) (13 lessons)	reading of passages from textbooks. Demonstration reading by either the teacher or one fluent reader. Reading games that are focused on comprehension of the story/text read.	shared reading. Also less communal reading. Move towards independence Less pictures and other aids that support comprehension. Reading for Comprehension (50%) appears to dominate lessons, followed by grammar (20%) and vocabulary (20%).
		Vocabulary -pre-teaching of vocabulary prior to reading a passage in which teacher reads words aloud and provide their meanings. -guided pronunciation, intonation and articulation of vocabulary items/words. (7 lessons).	Guided and independent reading aloud. Independent reading and use of vocabulary in own sentences. Dictionary usage is limited to specific situations and terms.	Use of contextual clues, diagrams, pictures, graphs and other to illustrate meaning. There is a shift towards vocabulary being taught in context (contextual meaning) rather than dictionary meanings of words. Vocabulary is taught through different subjects – subject specific register.
		Fluency -practising reading speed -observing punctuation (2 Lessons)	Integrated in other methods	Always subsumed in vocabulary, comprehension and grammar as well as other learning areas in the formal curriculum. Fluency is hardly taught as the specific thrust of a single lesson but is rather interwoven in lessons where reading is involved, especially reading for comprehension.
	Writing (8 lessons)	Handwriting	Demonstration	Seldom taught explicitly in the school but often commented upon. No time is specifically set aside for this in the class timetable.
		Written work -drawing, spelling, presentation and	Fill-in, choose, draw, copy, list, name, colour, cut, paste, etc.	Learners are exposed to different learning styles and means of

		sentence construction.		presentation such as drawings, illustrations, charts, and pictures. Largely tasks of low cognitive value but that render marking easy. Rather non-generative tasks. Work is often erased from chalkboards before learners complete writing. See 23.11.2012.
	Grammar (6 lessons)	The past and the future tenses, verbs and adverbs, subject-verb agreement and gender.	Chorusing of words and topics. Discussion of lesson items with the teacher probing questions. Mixed methods (unclear strategies)	Multiple language errors in teachers' work, see 23.01.2012.
	Applied literacy in other subjects. (3 lessons)	Emphasis on neatness, legibility, shaping, slanting, pressing, drawing, sentence construction, reading and comprehension.	Mixed methods and unidentifiable pedagogies used.	See smudging in learners' work and also on scanned documents.
Kolo (32 lessons)	Reading (8 lessons)	Reading for Comprehension	Reading aloud by one learner or the teacher as others follow in their textbooks. Independent reading of text to the teacher. Only one instance of real independent reading to the self, probably due to insufficient learning resources. Shared reading of passages Communal reading of sections of a passage.	Identification of the topic is confusing. Is the topic what is stated in the textbook, comprehension, classwork or reading? See 24.01.2012. Teacher here does not seem to understand what 'topic' means.
	Vocabulary (9 lessons)	-pre-teaching of vocabulary before reading a passage.	Guided reading aloud in chorus Independent reading Word usage in sentences - Teacher directly gives meanings of words	Often integrated in grammar and comprehension. There is some obsession with vocabulary (28%)and grammar

			and often provides examples in which target vocabulary is used in sentences. Pedagogies rather unclear. strategies	(30%) as seen from the spike in the frequency of these literacy units/components .
	Grammar (10 lessons)	-adverbs (1)and adjectives (2) -plural and singular forms of words ending with –f and taking -ive (thief-thieves)(2) and words that change form such as ox to oxen (1). -The present continuous (progressive)(2) and the past participle tenses (e.g. has gone, has stolen etc.) (2).	Independent and guided practice in the construction and usage of specific vocabulary and grammatical items. Drill methods punctuated by excessive repetition and emphasis. Mixed methods	Taught more than any other language and literacy area.
	Writing (2 lessons)	Written work -punctuation -quality and neatness	Mixed methods in which the teacher employed different techniques to teach content.	Different conventions on writing the date see January 10, 2012; 10 January 2012; 10.01.2012 and 10/01/2012. Smudges, incomplete work, illegible writing.
		Handwriting	Mixed methods (not taught explicitly).	Cursive writing is generally poor and hardly taught explicitly. Chalkboards have no lines and teachers' work is not exemplary.
	Applied literacy (3 lessons)	Subject based pedagogies -discussion -expositions -read alouds -evaluative methods	Reading aloud/chorusing Independent and guided reading Shared reading Group reading etc.	Teachers seeing language teaching as an aside to their responsibilities. Teachers missing classes in what is perceived as fear of being observed. Teachers rumbling about with grade 4 content, see 21.02.2012.

Major shifts between grades

- Differences in writing conventions on the date, topic identification and quality requirements.
- Reduction in the frequency in reading aloud and chorusing to silent reading.
- Greater thrust towards independent reading and homework.
- Less support for learning in terms of charts, pictures and literacy reading materials.

- Move from grammar (from 41% to 20% of lessons) to reading for comprehension (20% up to about 50%).
- Vocabulary (which becomes subject specific register) being taught in context with less dependence on dictionaries.
- Integration of skills when teaching reading. Lessons focus on multiple skills rather than being centred on isolated skills.

Comparison of schools by grade and recurrent themes

Theme	NELLUS	KOLO
Grade 3 reading (all skills)	There is a greater emphasis on reading for fluency and comprehension with pronounced emphasis on reading speed, observing punctuation and intonation. Passages are read at least 3 times before discussions and other activities are engaged on. Such readings are reinforced with picture discussions, explanations, translation and illustrations. Finger pointing emphasized when reading.	- Because learners had started learning the English language earnestly in September 2011, the greater emphasis here remained on vocabulary, word attack and phonics. - Generally passages were read and later translated to vernacular before discussions, teacher expositions and other activities. - Support for reading was in the form of pictures, illustrations and other visuals to enhance comprehension. - Finger pointing was strictly emphasized here to the extent of demanding a learner to hold the book with the right hand while finger pointing with the left. - Reading skills are often integrated in lessons.
Vocabulary	Vocabulary/new words are often integrated with teaching of other skills such as fluency and comprehension. Vocabulary was taught independent of context, often with the use of dictionaries. There is regulated tendency to translate to vernacular languages.	- Vocabulary/new words are often written on word cards and their meanings taught directly to the learner, independent of context. - Dictionaries were not in use in these grades in this school. - Words are always translated to local languages.
Writing (to include handwriting)	Handwriting is significantly neglected as only one lesson on handwriting was observed out of the 19 lessons seen in the school. Frequency of writing is quite poor probably due to teacher-learner ratios. Quality is not quite up to standard. See samples. Generally fill-ins, choose, complete and other low order, non-generative	- Handwriting is generally neglected here as not a single lesson was observed out the 22 lessons observed. As a consequence, learners' handwriting is generally poor in the grade 3 classes. - Frequency of writing is rather low as learners only wrote about two exercises per day rather than 4 as per the curriculum requirements. - Quality of written work in learners'

	writing – probably meant to make marking easier for the teacher. Cursive hardly taught as of the end of grade 3.	exercise books was generally below the expectations of the grade. • Non-generative • No introduction of cursive writing as of the end of 2011.
Grammar	This has a very high frequency in lessons taught in this school, 6 out of 19 lessons being grammar lessons. Grammar rules are hardly explained as often learners are just told the correct answer without justification.	• 9 out of 22 lessons involved grammar (obsession with grammar). • Generally the grade 3 teachers here had their own challenges with the English grammar prior to teaching it to kids.
Resources	Textbooks (*English for the New Nation*, and *Viva English: Resource and Reading Book Grade 3*); reading cards, charts, readers etc.	Textbook *English for the New Nation*, readers, charts, reading cards etc.
Predominant strategies	Reading aloud (approximately 80% of all lessons that involved reading involved children reading aloud and chorusing), shared reading (15%) and independent guided reading (5%).	Predominantly reading aloud (at least 90% of lessons that involved aspects of reading involved reading aloud and chorusing) and shared reading (10%). This could be attributed to large sections of the learners who could hardly read with reasonable fluency, speed and comprehension.
Key Reflections	Generally the level of literacy is higher in this school (48% literacy rate in ANAs of 2010) than the situation at Kolo. Key areas of focus for the teachers here are fluency, comprehension and vocabulary.	Generally the level of literacy is lower in this school (12% literacy rate in ANAs of 2010) than the situation at Nellus. Key areas of focus for the teachers here were word attack, phonics and vocabulary.

<u>**Reader's Report completed by J M Place**</u>

PhD Proposal submitted by Juniel S. T. Matavire

Title: Transitional Literacy in Gauteng Primary Schools: Two Collective Case Studies

of Reading and Writing Experiences of Grade 3 and 4 Learners

Thank you for asking me to be a reader of this proposed study. The area of research is valuable and necessary as educators grapple with 'the Grade 4 slump'. The possible contribution of this particular study to the research in this area is positive. The paucity of local data will begin to be addressed.

The literature review has included a number of interesting sources, however much more reading will be needed to flesh out this section of the thesis. At present, too few authorities inform the writer's understanding of the requirements of a good literacy programme in primary schools.

The candidate has begun to distil the research plan and has identified key areas pertinent to the study. I believe that more focus on the CAPS curriculum documents will need to inform the study, especially since CAPS implementation begins in January 2012 in all Foundation Phase classes. The candidate has made a number of rather broad generalisations about the curriculum requirements at Foundation Phase level which are not accurate. For instance on page 17, "... while handwriting (foundation phase) and writing as an expressive, creative activity (intermediate phase) is given preference." On what basis is this claim made? Has the candidate examined closely the requirements at Foundation Phase level of the NCS? Is the focus in the curriculum on neatness and automaticity of letter formation rather than on the communicative aspects of writing? Much wider reading is required.

A closer look at the unpacking of results of the South African participants in the PIRLS study will also need to be undertaken before claims are made that Home Language always results in better and quicker acquisition of literacy skills (page 18).

The candidate needs to read around the research on the development of writing in African children across the African continent in order to gain deeper insight into the problems in the development of writing in South African children. Some interesting research in this area has been done in Botswana.

The research design section indicates a project that is possible to undertake. I suggest that research participants that might be worth including in the case studies are the parents. Their observations of the attitudes of their youngsters to learning as they move from one phase to the next may be very useful in this study.

I am interested in why the decision to use only two Grade 4 teachers in the study was taken? What happens if one or both of these teachers leave the schools? Should the study not include the same number of teachers from each grade?
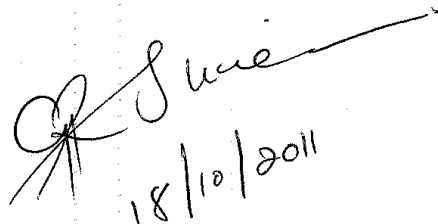
This study is still in its very early stages and I look forward to reading the completed thesis in the future.

I recommend that the proposal be accepted and that the candidate note the recommendations made.

J. M. Place (Dr)

Wits School of Education

Foundation Phase Division

University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg

Faculty of Humanities – Postgraduate Office

Student Number: 569814

MR JUNIEL MATAVIRE
301 Gardenia Court
169 Johnston Street
Sunnyside
0001

21 October 2011

Dear Mr Matavire

APPROVAL OF PROPOSAL FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY (FULL-TIME)

I am pleased to be able to advise you that the readers of the Graduate Studies Committee have approved your proposal entitled *"Traditional Literacy in Gauteng Primary Schools: Two collective case studies of reading and writing Experiences of Grades 3 and 4 learners."* and you have now been admitted to full candidature. I confirm that Professor Kerryn Dixon has been appointed as your supervisor in the Curriculum department.

The normal period of registration for a full-time candidate for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (FT) is two years minimum, five years maximum, during which time the thesis is completed. The thesis is normally submitted to the Faculty Office on or before 15 February of the third (or fifth) year of registration. All students are required to RE-REGISTER at the beginning of each year.

You are required to submit three bound copies and one unbound copy plus 1 CD in pdf (Adobe) format of your research report to the Faculty Office. The three bound copies go to the examiners and are retained by them and the unbound copy is retained by the Faculty Office as back up.

Kindly keep us informed of any change of address during the year.

Note: All MA and PhD candidates who intend graduating shortly must meet your ETD requirements at least 6 weeks after your supervisor has received the examiners reports. **Students must remain registered at the Faculty Office until graduation.**

Yours sincerely

Ha Modau

Hale Modau (Mrs)
Postgraduate Division
Faculty of Humanities
Private Bag X3
Wits, 2050
Tel: +27 11 717 4008

Juniel Matavire

PhD title: Transitional literacy in Gauteng primary schools – two collective case studies of reading and
writing experiences of Grade 3 and 4 learners

Supervisor: Kerryn Dixon

Reader Report: Hamsa Venkatakrishnan

The case for focusing on transitional literacy across Grades 3 and 4 is established in the opening pages of
this proposal, with literature used well to point to the 'Grade 4 slump' that motivates the study. The
transition referred to in the title of the proposed study is between Foundation and Intermediate Phases.
References are made to the fact that curriculum demands in terms of literacy shift between these
phases, and further, that the Language in Education policy has also placed emphasis on this transition
point – with some confusions between the thrust of different policies identified. Findings from the
literature base on the development of reading and writing skills are described within the literature
background covered in the proposal.

An issue that is worth thinking further about is the relationship between findings from the literature
background on the development of reading and writing skills, and the nature of development of reading
and writing skills that is presented in curricular documents. At present, there is more detail on the
former, but quite limited explanation of the latter (and more on the nature and emphases within
Foundation Phase than within Intermediate Phase). A possible way to think about the purposes of a
literature review for a study like this is that it provides theories on how best to promote the
development of reading and writing skills, which can provide lenses for analyzing curricular content and
sequencing. Literature findings can therefore be linked to an analysis of curriculum which can shed light
on areas of broad agreement, areas that are under-developed, and areas where there may be conflict
with what is advocated in the literature. This kind of critical analysis can in turn, support the
identification of potentially affording/problematic areas to focus on within the empirical data collection
phase.

The research design is generally well thought through, but it took me some time to get to the
understandings that extensive periods of classroom observation are planned for the second half of
Grade 3 and the first half of Grade 4 – as this is explained rather late on within the research design
section (p28). In terms of participants, the rationale for focusing on two Grade 3 and 1 Grade 4 teacher
in each school is stated, rather than justified. This selection tends to work again the earlier statement
that the school is the 'case' – which might suggest that all Grade 3 and Grade 4 classes within the two
selected schools would be in focus. If the aim is to go in depth with a smaller number of participants, it
may be worth using the literature and curriculum, as noted above, to identify critical areas, and then use
the interviews across all the teachers to identify either 'telling cases' – cases of interest in relation to the
critical areas identified, or 'typical cases' – teachers, who on the basis of interview responses, can be
justified as representing the group well on key indicators. The latter position appears to come through in

the reference to representing broader 'general practices' on p26. I would suggest audio taping (at least) all interviews, but it is worth while thinking through how you will identify the input of the teachers selected for observation within group interview responses – it might be useful to be able to link observational data with interview data, and this would be easier to do if interviews were video-recorded.

I think the key point to bear in mind when trying to make judgments on whether 'knowledge of the English language that learners and teachers have' is 'adequate for the discipline specific demands of the curriculum at Grade 4' (p31-2) – is to have a clear idea of how data will enable this question to be answered. Firstly, it is probably worth asking this question at Grade 3 and Grade 4, rather than just at Grade 4. Secondly, curriculum analysis needs to have identified – probably through the use of the hierarchies drawn from the literature – what the curriculum demands at each grade in relation to reading and writing are (and maybe worth thinking about restricting to specific disciplines rather than trying to cover all). Thirdly, in this already complex environment of what literature-based prior evidence might advocate in terms of good development practices for reading and writing, compared and contrasted with curriculum specification, classroom observation will also bring in learners' current levels of development as a further variable that needs to be considered when analyzing teachers' interview responses and classroom literacy practices. Taking some time over the second part will allow for the teacher and classroom based data to be compared and analysed for greater or lesser alignment with literature based evidence/ curriculum-based content and practices. Out of this, I think it becomes more possible to rigorously make claims about 'adequacy of teacher knowledge/practices' for developing literacy levels of learners.

Overall, I enjoyed reading this proposal, and think that the work is topical and well motivated. Also of interest is that Corin Mathews is also looking at the Grade 3/ Grade 4 interface – with reference to whether teachers' selections and presentations of tasks on division are well aligned and developmentally appropriate across the two grades. His study is motivated by Grade 4 teachers' reports that Grade 3 teachers 'overestimate' learners' proficiency. It may well be worth the two students talking further at PhD weekends. In conclusion, I am happy to **accept this proposal, with the supervisor working with the candidate to take my comments on board where useful into the doctoral study:**

Accepted, but candidate should take note of warnings/ recommendations.

I wish the candidate all the best with this work, and look forward to hearing the findings in due course.

Hamsa Venkatakrishnan

25th Sep 2011

education

Department: Education
GAUTENG PROVINCE

GDE RESEARCH APPROVAL LETTER

Date:	27 September 2011
Name of Researcher:	Matavire J.
Address of Researcher:	301 Gardenia Court
	149 Johnson Street
	Sunnyside
	Pretoria
	0002
Telephone Number:	078 113 8987
Fax Number:	012 348 9531
Email address:	jstmatavire@gmail.com
Research Topic:	Transitional Literacy in Gauteng Schools: Two Collective Case studies of Reading and Writing experiences of Grade 3 and 4 Learners
Number and type of schools:	TWO Primary Schools
District/s/HO	Tshwane South

Re: Approval in Respect of Request to Conduct Research

This letter serves to indicate that approval is hereby granted to the above-mentioned researcher to proceed with research in respect of the study indicated above. The onus rests with the researcher to negotiate appropriate and relevant time schedules with the school/s and/or offices involved to conduct the research. A separate copy of this letter must be presented to both the School (both Principal and SGB) and the District/Head Office Senior Manager confirming that permission has been granted for the research to be conducted.

The following conditions apply to GDE research. The researcher may proceed with the above study subject to the conditions listed below being met. Approval may be withdrawn should any of the conditions listed below be flouted:

1. *The District/Head Office Senior Manager/s concerned must be presented with a copy of this letter that would indicate that the said researcher/s has/have been granted permission from the Gauteng Department of Education to conduct the research study.*

1

Making education a societal priority

Office of the Director: Knowledge Management and Research
9th Floor, 111 Commissioner Street, Johannesburg, 2001
P.O. Box 7710, Johannesburg, 2000 Tel: (011) 355 0506
Email: David.Makhado@gauteng.gov.za
Website: www.education.gpg.gov.za

2.   *The District/Head Office Senior Manager/s must be approached separately, and in writing, for permission to involve District/Head Office Officials in the project.*

3.   *A copy of this letter must be forwarded to the school principal and the chairperson of the School Governing Body (SGB) that would indicate that the researcher/s have been granted permission from the Gauteng Department of Education to conduct the research study.*

4.   *A letter / document that outlines the purpose of the research and the anticipated outcomes of such research must be made available to the principals, SGBs and District/Head Office Senior Managers of the schools and districts/offices concerned, respectively.*

5.   *The Researcher will make every effort obtain the goodwill and co-operation of all the GDE officials, principals, and chairpersons of the SGBs, teachers and learners involved. Persons who offer their co-operation will not receive additional remuneration from the Department while those that opt not to participate will not be penalised in any way.*

6.   *Research may only be conducted after school hours so that the normal school programme is not interrupted. The Principal (if at a school) and/or Director (if at a district/head office) must be consulted about an appropriate time when the researcher/s may carry out their research at the sites that they manage.*

7.   *Research may only commence from the second week of February and must be concluded before the beginning of the last quarter of the academic year.*

8.   *Items 6 and 7 will not apply to any research effort being undertaken on behalf of the GDE. Such research will have been commissioned and be paid for by the Gauteng Department of Education.*

9.   *It is the researcher's responsibility to obtain written parental consent of all learners that are expected to participate in the study.*

10.   *The researcher is responsible for supplying and utilising his/her own research resources, such as stationery, photocopies, transport, faxes and telephones and should not depend on the goodwill of the institutions and/or the offices visited for supplying such resources.*

11.   *The names of the GDE officials, schools, principals, parents, teachers and learners that participate in the study may not appear in the research report without the written consent of each of these individuals and/or organisations.*

12.   *On completion of the study the researcher must supply the Director: Knowledge Management & Research with one Hard Cover bound and an electronic copy of the research.*

13.   *The researcher may be expected to provide short presentations on the purpose, findings and recommendations of his/her research to both GDE officials and the schools concerned.*

14.   *Should the researcher have been involved with research at a school and/or a district/head office level, the Director concerned must also be supplied with a brief summary of the purpose, findings and recommendations of the research study.*

The Gauteng Department of Education wishes you well in this important undertaking and looks forward to examining the findings of your research study.

Kind regards

[signature]

Dr David Makhado   2011 / 09 / 27

Director: Knowledge Management and Research

education

Department: Education
GAUTENG PROVINCE

Matavire Juniel
301 Gardenia Court
149 Johnson Street
Sunnyside
Pretoria, 0001
Mobile : 078 113 8987; Fax   : 012 348 9531

Cc: The Principal and SGB

Dear Sir

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH: MATAVIRE JUNIEL

Your research application has been approved by Head Office. The full title of your Research: "**Transitional Literacy in Gauteng Primary Schools: Two Collective Case Studies of Reading and writing Experiences of Grade 3 and 4 Learners**". You are expected to adhere strictly to the conditions given by Head Office.   You are also advised to communicate with the school principal/s and/or SGB/s regarding your research and time schedule.

Our commitment of support may be rescinded if any form of irregularity/ no compliance to the terms in this letter or any other departmental directive/ if any risk to any person/s or property or our reputation is realised, observed or reported.

Terms and conditions

1. The safety of all the learners and staff at the school must be ensured at all times.
2. All safety precautions must be taken by the researcher and the school. The Department of Education may not be held accountable for any injury or damage to property or any person/s resulting from this process. The school/s must ensure that sound measures are put in place to protect the wellness of the researcher and his/ her property.

NB   Kindly submit your report including findings and recommendations to the District at least two weeks after conclusion of the research. You may be requested to participate in the Department of Education's mini-research conference to discuss your findings and recommendations with departmental officials and other researchers.

The District wishes you well.

Yours sincerely

Mrs. H.E Kekana
Director: Tshwane South District

1/1

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