PROBLEMS AND POSSIBILITIES IN MULTILINGUAL CLASSROOMS IN THE WESTERN CAPE

FINAL RESEARCH REPORT

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SECTION ONE: CONTEXTS

1. BACKGROUND TO THE RESEARCH PROJECT[1]

1.1. One of the most dramatic but unplanned consequences of the political changes that took place after the general elections in 1994 as far as the education sector is concerned was the sudden inflow of African-language-speaking learners into schools which had previously been open only to people classified white or coloured (in the Western Cape) For reasons that are not entirely clear to us (at PRAESA), this inflow of learners was not accompanied by a redeployment of appropriately qualified Xhosa-speaking teachers, especially to those schools where; Xhosa-speaking learners became came the majority or a sizeable minority of the school population.

1.2. The consequence of this dynamic was (and continues to be) a situation in which both educators and learners are virtually incommunicado in their relations with each other. Since all the teachers speak English and Afrikaans but hardly any Xhosa, and most of the learners have either no grasp or, at best, a very imperfect proficiency in the English language, it is almost impossible for them to interact meaningfully. The result is frustration, disillusionment and increasing (racial and ethnic) prejudice on all sides.

1.3. During 1995/96 we were approached by various ex-HoA and ex-HoR schools/teachers for assistance in regard to the problems they were experiencing in the new situation of multilingual classes. As a result of these approaches, three of our staff members undertook a six-months'. long field investigation into the problems which teachers were raising.

1.4. On the basis of comparative (international) research as well as our own understanding of first principles, we began exploring strategies to address these problems in certain typical schools. The WCED co-operated in identifying the schools and, to a certain extent, monitoring our research. This process is continuing at present. It involves many different facets including in-service teacher education and development, materials development and teaching methodology.

1.5. Over the past year a Further Diploma in Multilingual Education for in-service teachers offered by PRAESA and the School of Education at the University of Cape Town, has afforded us access to and insight into a number of township primary schools. These visits confirmed a trend towards 'the-earlier-the-better immersion in the target language (i.e. English, and in some cases Afrikaans) of their (mostly) Xhosa-speaking children by parents in a desperate drive for proficiency in the high-status target language.

1.6. Indications are that the increasing use of English as language of learning and teaching (LoLT) in the Foundation Phase at the expense of learners' primary languages negatively affects teaching and learning in many township schools. While the teacher's proficiency in the learners' primary language may ameliorate the situation, comparative research findings show target-language immersion of speakers of low-status languages into a high-status language is a recipe for failure. More systematic observation is needed to confirm this trend and to grasp its full implications in classrooms that are themselves becoming increasingly multilingual in composition (although not at the rate of their ex-HoR counterparts).

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[1] The Background to the Research Project, as well as the Objectives, are taken from the Project Proposal.

2. OBJECTIVES

2.1 To identify existing teaching and classroom management strategies used by teachers in multilingual classrooms in primary schools in the Western Cape, with a particular focus on township (ex-DET) schools.

2.2 To identify the problems that arise in multilingual classrooms in primary schools in the Western Cape.

2.3 To propose, on the basis of preliminary trials, strategies that are likely to succeed in addressing these problems. [2]

3. LINKS WITH OTHER RESEARCH INITIATIVES

The international research on bilingual and multilingual education is vast in scope and goes back several decades. Only the most salient findings with regard to schooling will be mentioned here in the hope that they may provide a sufficient sounding-board for the prevent project. On the other hand, the international debate on approaches to emergent literacies is relatively young, yet fiercely contested; a brief mention of a shift in approach must suffice.

Within the local and international literature on bilingual and multilingual schooling, there is substantial agreement on a number of related points.

3.1. There is general consensus on the overriding value of the educational use of the primary or home language (mother tongue), where appropriately supported, particularly but not only where that home language is a minority or marginalised language of low status. In Europe, North America and Japan, home-language schooling has always been regarded as axiomatic for the dominant majority. Since UNESCO's (1953) endorsement of the educational role for the `vernacular', pressure has mounted on European immigrant countries and on African post-colonial societies to provide for some form of home-language teaching and learning. A good post-colonial example of this is Nigeria's six-year primary project, in which learners in project schools who were exposed to home-language teaching for all six years of primary schooling did significantly better than their peers who switched from Yoruba to English as the LoLT, after only three years (see Elugbe 1996). In South Africa, the benefits of `moedertaalonderwys' for those classified white have long been established.

3.2. As a corollary, there is near-universal agreement on the pernicious effects of a too-early abandoning of the home language as a language of learning and teaching (LoLT) in favour of a language of higher status. Variations of such 'subtractive' include target language submersion from day 1 of schooling, delayed sudden immersion, and gradual immersion in the target language. A longitudinal study by Ramirez et al (1991) in the US confirms the poor learning outcomes of early-exit bilingual programmes (delayed immersion) for language minority children. In South Africa, the HSRC's Threshold Project (Macdonald 1990) records the inadequacy of four years of `mother tongue education' in preparing learners for the abrupt switch to English-medium schooling by Grade 5, and attendant school failure.

3.3. Most researchers agree on the cognitive, linguistic and affective and social benefits of bilingual education, understood as the use, at some point in the schooling process, of two languages of learning and teaching (LoLT) -of which one is a home language. Or, as Pattanayak puts it, `the additive value of bilingualism' (1986:11). In the USA, a recent comprehensive longitudinal study into school effectiveness for '"language minority students" identified three key predictors of academic success, namely
1. cognitively complex on-grade-level instruction through students' first language for as long as possible (at least through Grade 5 or 6) and cognitively complex on-grade-level academic

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instruction through the second language (English) for part of the school day in each succeeding grade throughout students' schooling.
2. the use of current approaches to teaching the academic curriculum through two languages
3. changes in the sociocultural context of schooling. (Thomas & Collier 1997: 2-3)

Crucially for present purposes, the authors highlight the value of a cross-curricular dual-language approach:

> 'Only those students who have received strong cognitive and academic development through their first language for many years (at least through Grade 5 or 6), as well as through the second language (English), are doing well in school as they reach the last of the high school years.' (ibid: 1-2)

The author's findings with regard to `language minority students' (i.e. home-language speakers of low-status languages) in the USA (e.g. Hispanics) can easily be applied to South Africa's `African' majority with regard to the relative power/status of the relevant languages. This holds true for speakers of African languages both in ex-DET and in ex-DEC classrooms.

3.4. In many societies, bilingual education is as much a political statement attributing value to certain languages and their (L1) speakers, and therefore a matter of linguistic human rights as it is an educational strategy (Hakuta 1986; Alexander 1989). The promotion of multilingualism in education therefore requires the strong political will of all interest groups (notably the state) in order to mobilise the necessary resources for its implementation (see LANGTAG 1996; Heugh 1998). However, such mobilisation is only likely to occur where languages are viewed as economic resources, and where economic incentives exist outside of schooling for proficiency in both (all) languages (LANGTAG 1996; Heugh 1995).

3.5. Recent developments in literacy studies have challenged the dominant `autonomous' model, in which literacy is viewed as a technology of separable skills related to reading and writing. Instead, proponents of the New Literacy Studies have developed a `social practices' approach, otherwise known as an `ideological' approach which emphasises that `[Literacy] is a social process, in which particular socially constructed technologies are used within particular institutional frameworks for specific social purposes' (Street 1984:97). South African applications can be found in the pioneering research undertaken by the University of Cape Town's Social Uses of Literacy project, in which the editors sum up Street's view of literacy practices as

> 'referring to both behaviour and the social and cultural conceptualisations that give meaning to the uses of reading and/or writing. He calls this alternative orientation an `ideological ` view of literacy to emphasise, first, the social nature of literacy and, second, the multiple and sometimes contested nature of literacy practices.'
> (Prinsloo & Breier 1996:18)

3.6. At the level of the linguistically diverse classroom, Edelsky argues that a change in LoLT is not enough:

> While merely translating a mainstream curriculum into different languages may provide minority language children with a spurt in cultural identity (it might even prompt short term improvement in test scores - after all, at least now the vehicle if not the task would make some sense), it will not contribute to certain substantive educational goals. Those goals are for children to learn to think critically about the range of subjects, to pose problems and envision and work towards solutions, to make decisions based on articulated, informed evidence, and to be able to use written language for these ends. Reading and writing in this view entail the

creation of meaningful texts .... In other words, the goal is for children to control print so that it can serve personal and group interests; i.e., so it empowers.
(Edelsky 1991:68-69)

This sentiment is echoed by Bloch, who notes that South African `understandings and approaches to literacy have been sidelined with the focus tending to be on which language children should learn in' (1998:27). Bloch's research into the literacy practices at pre-school and foundation phase (junior primary) level in linguistically diverse (multilingual) Western Cape schools paints a bleak picture of reading and writing practices that correspond largely to the autonomous view of literacy critiqued by Street. Bloch argues in favour of an application of Whole Language principles which, in the current context, intersect neatly with recent. policies promoting multilingualism in schooling. Specifically, this should entail creating `opportunities for children to, begin and continue reading and writing in African languages as well as English' (ibid: 28).

Koopman's (1997) empirical investigation into what four teachers in `linguistically diverse' Western Cape primary school classrooms do when teaching a concept of print, finds that

> an inability to speak and understand the languages of all the children in the class might be shown to have some impact on a teacher's effectiveness in teaching a concept of print. However... the teacher's understanding of print and text is extremely influential in how and what is mediated (what teachers say and do) to children in terms of reading acquisition. It is apparent that three of the four teachers in this study display fundamental confusions about what reading is.
> (Koopman 1997:122)

While it has not been the brief of the present research to empirically establish teachers' understandings of reading, an impressionistic account of these is appropriate in the context of observed literacy practices.

3.7. Two further local research initiatives in multilingual classrooms require mentioning. One involves a small number of schools which, in conjunction with PRAESA and the Cape Town College of Education, have identified the language-related nature of the communication breakdown and have begun to explore ways of alleviating matters. Several final-year bilingual (Xhosa/English) students from the College now spend their third-term teaching practice stint in these (English-medium) classrooms, monitored and supported by PRAESA staff. The goal is to provide a linguistically-supportive environment for all learners, of which the majority or a sizeable minority are Xhosa-speaking. In practice this entails raising the status of Xhosa through use in activities such as interpreting, team-teaching, story-reading and -telling, singing, acting, and bringing Xhosa into the print environment of the classroom (Pliiddemann, forthcoming).

The second is PRAESA's multilingual demonstration schools project. It is conceptualised as a pilot project to demonstrate the feasibility of different models of multilingual schooling (i.e. bilingual, even trilingual) under Western Cape conditions. While the provincial education department has given its full rhetorical support, economic constraints have prevented it from making available a school, or even providing an extra teacher. As a result, PRAESA has had to raise the funds for an ex-HoR school in the Wynberg area to employ a bilingual (Xhosa/English) early-childhood teacher who since January 1998 has worked alongside two Grade I teachers. In a context in which more than half of the children are Xhosa-speaking but the teachers are not), her work is essential in working with and developing the languages children already know, thereby improving the chances of concept-formation as well as affirming the identities of all the children. The overall goal is to extend and deepen the language support work described above to a systematic exploration of bilingual (e.g. dual-medium) education in several sites. A proposed longitudinal study could, if

properly designed, provide significant impetus towards the promotion of dual language schooling in South Africa, and to the promotion of multilingualism in education more generally.

4. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS

The research design was aimed at gaining a schematic overview of typical problems and possibilities in a cross-section of multilingual Grade 1 classrooms in the Western Cape. We were to identify language-related communication difficulties experienced in the classroom, and the strategies employed by teachers to overcome these.

4.1. Definition of `multilingual classrooms'

However, from the outset we were presented with a problem of definition. Our own prior understanding of a multilingual classroom was (and remains) a situation of linguistic diversity among learners. In the Western Cape, such situations are largely to be found in the historically 'coloured' and historically -'white' schools (all English-and/or Afrikaans-medium) where the enrolment of increasing numbers of£ Xhosa-speaking learners means that there are at least two, and often three languages in one classroom. In most cases, teachers are able to use English and Afrikaans, but not Xhosa.. In terms of DE's briefing document, the understanding of multilingual classrooms was somewhat broader, and includes the linguistically far more homogeneous classrooms of the ex-DET schools in the townships. In most of these schools, Xhosa is the home language of the overwhelming majority of learners and teachers. At Grade 1 level, there is very little linguistic diversity - with a few notable exceptions, as we shall see.

The definitional conundrum was solved in two ways. Firstly, we deliberately chose two ex-DET schools that were different from_ the majority of Western Cape township-schools in terms of their choice of LoLT in the early years. The, schools, one Sotho-medium and the other Tswana-medium, are located in a predominantly Xhosa-speaking environment, and are staffed by teachers who are often trilinguaI. The linguistic composition of the class is somewhat less homogeneous, as many children have more than one home language (e.g. Tswana and Xhosa). And the ubiquitous drive for English means that the third language is never very far away. These two ex-DET schools and their Grade 1 classes, at least, could therefore comfortably be located in our definition of multilingual classrooms.

Our second definitional move was to anticipate that, with regard to the Xhosa-medium ex-DET schools, the presence of a variety of Xhosa dialects might render such classrooms bi- or even multi-dialectal - particularly in areas populated by recent immigrants from the rural areas of the Eastern Cape. This hypothesis remained unconfirmed, however, as we found no evidence of Xhosa dialects other than the standard one and the rare (learner) use of Vlaaitaal (Tsotsitaal). Again, however, the pressure for English resulted in the presence of English in classrooms in ways sometimes not acknowledged by the teacher. Nevertheless, the Xhosa-medium schools were only accommodated in the present research because of the DE stipulation that the majority of classrooms to be observed had to be in ex-DET (township) schools.

4.2. Selection criteria for sites [3]

The research proposal made provision for visits to between 8 and 10 project schools. We chose 10 in order to gain as much information as possible. Sites were selected according to the following criteria:

- ✍ public (state) schools only, i.e. no private schools formed part of the research
- ✍ diversity across former departments, i.e. a majority of ex-DET schools (6 of 10), with 3 ex-DEC (HoR) schools plus 1 ex-DEC (HoA) school

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[3]For a list of schools and teachers who participated in the research, see Appendices. Their names have been omitted from the body of the report in order to guarantee anonymity.

- ✍ diversity in terms of geographic location in order to cater for demographic and sociolinguistic variety, i.e. 2 schools in Guguletu, I each in Khayelitsha, Mfuleni, Khayamandi (Stellenbosch), Masiphumeleie (Sun Valley) (all ex-DET); 1 each in Faure, Mandalay, Hout Bay (all ex-HoR); and 1 in Observatory (ex-HoA)
- ✍ leamer composition, i.e. Grade 1 classes had to conform to our expanded definition of multilingual classrooms (see above). In the case of the ex-DEC schools, this meant significant numbers of Xhosa-speaking learners had to be present
- ✍ diversity with regard to LoLT, i.e. we chose as wide a range as possible. In the event, 4 classes had Xhosa as LoLT; 4 classes were English-medium; and I class each had, respectively, Afrikaans, Sotho, and Tswana as LoLT. One English- and the Afrikaans-medium class were in the same school, which is run along parallel-medium lines
- ✍ willingness of the schools and the teachers concerned to participate in the research (all schools approached agreed to participate)
- ✍ None of the schools in which PRAESA has been working during the past two years could be considered.

4.3. Research methods

As proposed, research methods comprised the following:
- ✍ non-participant classroom observation with the help of a classroom observation schedule and detailed field notes (for a template, see Appendix 2)
- ✍ interviews with teachers, tape-recorded and transcribed (see Appendix 3)
- ✍ language profile questionnaire, filled in by the principal (see Appendix 4)
- ✍ video-recordings of several teachers' lessons
- ✍ photographs of the classes in their classrooms

The basic research orientation was descriptive and impressionistic, and less empirical. In other words, no in-depth ethnographic or experimental methods were employed, as these would have gone beyond the scope of the research brief.

4.4. Narrative of the research process

After the research project was secured, five fieldworkers connected in various ways to PRAESA[4] were commissioned from February 1998. With the written consent and support-from the WCED PRAESA approached ten schools (see selection criteria, above)with a view to participation in the project. Initial contact was made via faxes (see Appendices), followed by an initial visit to each site to explain the purpose of the research more fully and meet the teachers who had agreed (or been designated) to give us access to their classrooms. The decisive factor that opened the schools' doors to us was the national Department of Education's involvement in the research. It appeared to signal the DE's seriousness in coming to grips with entry-level schooling in multilingual contexts.

From the beginning it became clear to us that the research team had to split into two in order to get in the required number of observations per school within the four-month period. Each team (one of three, the other of two fieldworkers) was tasked with observing 5 lessons in each of 5 classrooms, i.e. a total of 25 observations. A number of teachers were initially sceptical about the value of the research, and wanted to know how it would end up benefiting them. Eventually all agreed to admit us to their classrooms, a step which took courage in the current climate of threats to jobs, larger classes, new curriculum demands, and a new language policy.

By and large visits went off uneventfully and productively, despite a hiatus over the nation-wide teacher stav-a-way in early June (by which time most of the fieldwork had been completed anyway) and the occasional absence of a project teacher due to illness or other unforeseen circumstances. Towards the end of the series of visits, once teachers had begun to trust us, we broached the subject.

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[4] For a list of names of those involved, see Appendices.

of a possible video recording of a lesson. There was considerable reluctance at first from a number of the ex-DEC teachers. In the end, all but one allowed herself to be filmed by Mr John Valentine of the UCT's School of Education audio-visual unit, whose quiet expertise and experience led to minimal disruption in the lesson and resulted in excellent footage. Audio-taped interviews were also conducted right at the end of the fieldwork. Copies of both types of recordings have been promised to teachers as part of the quid pro quo. In some cases photographs were taken, although these proved so disruptive in terms of distracting ever-ready learners that they were taken mostly in posed shots at the end of the lesson.

The classroom observation schedule was refined after PRAESA fieldworkers attended several meetings of some of the Western Cape PEI -projects, where information and ideas were freely exchanged. We also benefited from discussions around the question of the researcher's bias as an observer, and on the difficult notion of `best practices' , so central to some of the other research projects.

Following the submission of the interim report in early July, JET suggested we do one more round of visits, find out about the schools' engagement (or otherwise) with the new LiEP, reduce the number of problems listed in the interim report, and systematise the findings. A final round of visits was accordingly undertaken in August/September. Project teachers were given copies of the report summary, and were invited to a workshop on 4 September to discuss the report and make recommendations. Each teacher was given a book voucher, some stationery, a copy of PRAESA's Family Guide to Multilingual Education. Teachers who had been interviewed and video-taped were given copies of transcripts and tapes, respectively. On the whole, teachers were positive about the report. Their suggestions are taken up in the Recommendations, below.

5. NEW LANGUAGE POLICY FOR SCHOOLS

The new language-in-education policy for public schools in South Africa is just over a year old at the time of writing. The policy, announce y Education minister Ben 11 in July 1997 was developed far more democratically than any of its predecessors and can safely be assumed to represent broad agreement on a sensitive issue. As Alexander (1996:1) points out, the issue of LoLT (medium of instruction) has always been explosive in South Africa.

The new policy centrally seeks to promote multilingualism as the optimal way of utilising the country's linguistic resources (DE 1997a). The significance of this orientation is that it seeks to elevate the status of those languages spoken by the majority of the people. On paper, the `other nine' official languages now have full equality with Afrikaans and English, formerly the country's only two official languages. The paradigm underlying the new language policy for schools

- ✍ recognises cultural diversity as a national asset, and sees the need to promote multilingualism and develop the 11 official languages
- ✍ endorses an additive approach to bilingualism
- ✍ gives individuals (in practice parents and guardians) the right of choice with regard to the LoLT. (DE 1997a: 2-3)

While making allowance for a number of variations, the document is clear about what it means by 'an additive approach to bilingualism.

Whichever route is followed, the underlying principle is to maintain home language(s) whilst providing access to, and the effective acquisition of, additional languages). (DE 1997a: 3) Other policy changes are designed to intersect with the language policy. One of these is the South African Schools Act (1996), in terms of which the school's governing body shall determine the

language policy of the school. On the curricular front, Curriculum 2005/OBE is somewhat less convincing in its support for `additive bilingual/ multilingual models of education', as these are given `apparent lip-service' (Du Toit et al 1997:5). Du Toit et al express concern that the reference to language of learning (in the singular) and the absence of any affirmation of `the cognitive role of the primary language' appear to signal the government's lack of commitment to overcoming `the deficit model of the past' (ibid: 6).

Whether schools would pick up on such inconsistencies in government policy, and to what extent their governing bodies are studying the policy documents closely for guidance with regard to their own language plans, is open to conjecture. It is safe to assume, however, that in the absence of a concerted implementation strategy on the part of the provincial education authorities, together with NGOs (as is the case with ELTIC and the Gauteng Ministry)[5], to empower school governing bodies, the latter will go the of least resistance and delay taking difficult decisions on LoLT and on teacher appointments. The WCED, by supporting certain initiatives such as the projected in-service training of subject advisers in respect of the appropriate strategies for multilingual classrooms and the distribution to all ordinary schools of the PRAESA Family Guide to Multilingual Education, amongst other materials, has also begun to show practical commitment to the implementation of the new language-in-education policy. However, it remains unclear to what extent schools are actually affected by the new language policy.

6. LANGUAGE PROFILE OF PROJECT SCHOOLS

The criteria for the selection of schools have been spelled out (see above). What follows is a brief description of each of the project schools[6] in terms of its language profile.

6.1. School A is an ex-DEC (HoR) school historically reserved for `coloureds'. It's location on a

School	Type	LoLT at Gr 1 of classes visited	Language profile of learners (whole school): home language						Language profile of teachers (whole school): home language					
			X	E	A	S	T	ot	X	E	A	S	T	ot
A	ex-HoR	E/A	194	20	421	11								
B	ex-HoR	Eng	469	237	156	3	1	2		8	16			
C	ex-HoA	Eng	408	162	20	9	3	19	16	1				
D	ex-HoR	Eng	397	2	151	2		3	2	4	8			
E	ex-DET	Xho	682	1	19	15	1	15	14	1				3
F	ex-DET	Xho	841			3	1	3	25					
G	ex-DET	Xho	1356						31					
H	ex-DET	Tsw	29		4	13	266		1			2	2	2
J	ex-DET	Sotho	66		24	190	70					10		
K	ex-DET	Xho	1415						31					

Table 1: Aspects of the language profiles of project schools

military base adjacent to two fast-growing `African' townships, and a dwindling enrolment of `coloured' children, has meant a rapid enrolment of mostly Xhosa-speaking learners in the last three years, particularly in the lower grades. Out of a total of 646 learners, 194 (30%) have Xhosa as their primary language, 421 (65%) are Afrikaans-speaking, 20 (3%) are English-speaking and 11 (1.5%) are Sotho-speaking. The school, which has parallel-language streams of English and Afrikaans in the first two grades (and only Afrikaans from Grade 3 upwards), has long recognised the crisis situation in which it finds itself on account of the fact that of the staff, only the principal is able to

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[5]See Maligvhada 1997.
[6] See Appendices for Coding Sheets

use Xhosa. The school's request to the WCED for the creation of an additional post for a Xhosa-speaking teacher to teach Xhosa as a subject, has the in-principle support of the Department. However, the latter's lack of funds and the relative poverty of the school's parent body means that no Xhosa-speaking teacher has as yet been appointed. (Ironically, the WCED a few months ago approached PRAESA to ask us what we could do for the school!) Both Grade 1 teachers expressed extreme frustration at their position: while Xhosa-speakers make up less than a third of the total school population, they constitute almost half of the Afrikaans Grade 1 class and about two-thirds of the English Grade 1 class. Parent apathy in avoiding meetings only aggravates what is fast becoming an intolerable situation for the teachers. While the teachers somehow get through each day, the cost to themselves and their learners is high.

6.2. School B is a new ex-HoR school (1993) in a new residential area and draws children from both working class and middle class homes. 53% of the children are 'African' in what is a historically-'coloured' school, i.e. the majority of learners are Xhosa-speaking. However, none of the teachers speak Xhosa, and are hence not able to provide any support for or maintenance of Xhosa. For the period 1995-1997 the school benefited from English enrichment and Afrikaans enrichment classes provided by an itinerant WCED Speech and Hearing Services team, who came to the school on one day of the week to provide support in the LoLT to those who needed it most, i.e. mostly Xhosa-speaking learners. English is offered as a medium from Grades 1-7, while Afrikaans is limited to Grades 3-7. In 1995 many of the Xhosa-speaking parents objected to the presence of a Xhosa-speaking teacher who had been temporarily employed in order to assist class teachers with communication difficulties. The teacher's temporary contract was not renewed.

6.3. School C is a former `white' school in one of the southern suburbs of Cape Town. Similar in size to School A with a total enrolment of 621 learners (42 per class on average), the school has seen an even more dramatic shift in enrolment patterns sinceJ994. Now fully 408 learners, or 66%, have Xhosa as a home language, followed by English with 26% (162), with smaller pockets of Afrikaans (ZO earners , Sotho (9), Tsonga (5), Tswana (3), Zulu (2), Pedi (1) and other (11). English remains the only medium or LoLT. In Grade 1, 67 of 85 learners (79%) divided into 2 classes are Xhosa-speaking. Despite having appointed a Xhosa-speaking teacher to the staff at Grade 1 level, the school is in desperate straits over the language barrier. The principal explains:

> We have a severe problem in that as our learners are predominantly Xhosa speakers (408 of 621) English is quite weak and Afrikaans often non-existent. We really battle with languages and cannot offer Xhosa as a full time second language due to our staff position."

Xhosa lessons are offered as extra lessons after school. Foundation phase learners receive extra English tuition `to bring them up to standard', according to the principal. An ameliorating factor at Grade 1 level is the full-time presence of a bilingual Xhosa/English parent as a teaching assistant and interpreter in the classroom. More detail on her position and tasks follows below.

6.4. School D, formerly a Mission school under the wing of the ex-HoR, has experienced similarly cataclysmic changes to its learner composition over a few short years. Afrikaans was the only LoLT until the beginning of 1997, when an English language stream was created alongside the Afrikaans in response to the pressure for English emanating from the majority Xhosa-speaking parent body. 397 of the school's 555 learners (71,5%) have Xhosa as a home language, while 151 (27%) speak Afrikaans at home. Only 2 children have English as a home language, the same number as for Sotho, and one less than for Zulu (3). In the Grade 1 (English) class we observed, roughly three-quarters of the children were Xhosa-speaking. At present Afrikaans is retained as LoLT from Grades 1-7, whereas English-medium classes exist at Grades 1,2,5,6, and 7. School D is in the relatively fortunate position of having 2 Xhosa-speaking teachers, one of whom is fluent in English also and the other in both English and Afrikaans. Together they are able to offer Xhosa as a subject

(L2 and L3) from Grades 2-7. In addition, the school enjoys the support of SAILI (Science and Industrial Leadership Initiative), a NGO which since January 1997 has provided language support in the form of two teaching assistants, one for Xhosa/English (foundation phase), the other for Xhosa/Afrikaans (intermediate and senior phase). The school also offers Xhosa lessons for teachers, and makes use of the services of a nearby School Clinic which sends staff to the school to do language and listening skills with the children most at risk of educational failure. The low socio-economic status of many of the children remains a constant threat to the culture of learning at the school.

6.5. School E. Because of its status as a former DET school staffed and attended by mostly L1 Xhosa speakers (682 of 733), School E is in a different category from Schools A, B, C, and D. The main differences are that the LoLT is Xhosa (not English or Afrikaans) at Grade 1 level; that the class, and the school as a whole, is linguistically almost homogeneous; and that there is no language barrier between teacher and learners. However, the school is in the middle of an informal settlement, and the poverty of many of the children is evident in the lack of uniforms, and in the existence of a feeding scheme. Teacher E blames parents for their ignorance and apathy concerning their children's education, making homework well-nigh impossible. The school has recently moved into a brand-new building, co-sponsored by the WCED and the private sector. An NGO concerned with improving the standard of Science teaching and providing access to English, SAILI, is involved in regular workshops at the school.

6.6. School F is situated in a predominantly Xhosa-speaking African township on the outskirts of Cape Town and is one of the biggest townships in the country. Most of the learners stay in shacks. Unemployment is high, leading to a prevalence of crime in the area. What is of significance in choosing this school was the increasing number of learners from the largely rural Eastern Cape and the fact that when they come to the Western Cape the only language they can speak is Xhosa. They are confronted with Afrikaans as the dominant language in the Western Cape, although not often spoken in the township. However, together with English, Afrikaans becomes the language of economic survival. School F has 848 children, with an average of 35,3 per class. In addition to regular classes, the school has two open-learning classes for over-age learners. The school also has a pre-school class, for which the WCED provides materials and human resources. Officially, Xhosa is the LoLT for Grades 1-3, with English as LoLT from Grades 4 to 7. Afrikaans is taught as a subject in Grades 4-7. The principal comments, `Parents prefer English to Afrikaans.' The school is linguistically almost totally homogeneous in terms of learner composition, with 841 of 848 learners having Xhosa as a home language. All 25 teachers have Xhosa as a home language. Recent and ongoing INSET interventions with regard to language and learning have come from READ and the Primary Science Programme. The WCED `sometimes' provides in-service training in OBE.

6.7. School G is located in a predominantly Xhosa-speaking African township adjacent to a working class coloured township. Residents mostly come from the Eastern Cape, particularly the former rural Transkei and Ciskei, but they are confronted with the Afrikaans and English languages with not enough background and exposure to these languages. This becomes very significant in the classroom. All this helps to explain the impact of the constraints of Afrikaans on their immediate environment and English as the dominant language in the classroom as dictated by the available resources supplied by the Department of Education. Until recently the school was sharing the same building with another school (`platooning'), resulting in a high media profile before the democratic elections. When we were about halfway through with our research we were happy to receive the news that the high school was now operating independently from the primary school using a completely new school building in the nearby area. School G is linguistically completely homogeneous, both in terms of learner and staff composition.

School H and School J are the only Tswana-medium and Sotho-medium schools, respectively, in our survey. Both are located in one of Cape Town's oldest townships, which is a predominantly Xhosa-speaking community. It has been of interest to us to find out to what extent the WCED, in a context in which Afrikaans, English and Xhosa are recognised as official languages, manages to allocate resources to these schools. The other reason for our decision to approach them was to see how teachers and learners coped with the alienation their home language might experience in the face of a predominantly Xhosa-speaking community, and the demand for English and Afrikaans as the perceived languages of economic power and dominance. The two schools seem to exercise a considerable degree of tolerance towards those learners who use Xhosa in the classroom because they do not have a good comprehension of Tswana or Sotho, respectively. Some learners have received more exposure to Xhosa than to Sotho or Tswana in their homes and in their community, although their parents prefer that they study in Sotho or in Tswana as their home language.

6.8. School H is a small school of 312. Learners, but with an average class size of 45. Tswana is a home language of the vast majority of children (266 of 312, or 85%), with small minorities of Xhosa- (9%) and Sotho-speakers (5%). 6 of 7 teachers have a Sotho-family language as a home language (i.e. Sotho, Pedi, Tswana). Tswana is the official LoLT for Grades 1-3, whereafter English takes over (Grades 4-7). Tswana, Xhosa, English and Afrikaans are all offered as language subjects at some point in the curriculum. The school offers no extra language lessons or language enrichment classes. INSET interventions have come in the form of OBE workshops offered by a number of NGOs and publishers. The principal comments on the language environment thus: `In the past three years the Grade 1's were taught in Tswana only and in Grade 2 English was introduced and in Grade 3 Afrikaans was introduced. But now all these languages are introduced in Grade l. English is our first language and then Tswana and Xhosa L2 and Afrikaans L3.' These comments indicate a shift to English under pressure from parents and the broader community. The school is preparing to establish a pre-primary class in which children are to be taught in Tswana and Xhosa in preparation for Grade 1.

6.9. School J employs Sotho as its LoLT in the Foundation Phase, whereafter English functions as official medium. The school is interesting for having three sizeable groups of L1 speakers: Sotho (190 of 350, or 54%), Tswana (70, or 20%) and Xhosa (66, or 19%). However, the majority of children understand and speak Xhosa as well as their home language, as they are surrounded by mostly Xhosa-speaking people in the township. All ten of the teachers are L1 Sotho speakers who are also fluent in Xhosa and English and who know some Afrikaans. Along with School H, School J is marginalised by the WCED, which does not have learning materials in Sotho and Tswana and does not cater for Sotho or Tswana as a subject. Occasionally materials are received from the North-West Province, but these are few and far between and are not `OBE-fied'.

6.10. School K is situated in a township of a Boland town which is predominantly Afrikaans-speaking. Most learners come from the surrounding farm areas as this is the only primary school for Xhosa-speaking learners in the area, although there is a very sizeable number of Xhosa speakers. What was of particular significance in choosing this area was that a number of other learners come from the rural areas of the Eastern Cape. The township looks very much like a slum area with most of the inhabitants living in shacks. Owing to the Afrikaans character of the nearby tertiary institution, teachers claim to be unable to receive support and help due to their being unable to understand Afrikaans. The school is linguistically homogeneous both in terms of staff and learner composition (everyone has Xhosa as a home language). Disturbingly, Xhosa is phased out as LoLT at the end of Grade 2, and is replaced by English - an indication of the pressure for English exerted by the school community. SAILI provides English enrichment at Intermediate Phase level.

6.11. A register of needs: ex-DET schools

Most of the ex-DET schools we visited were not obviously impoverished or in a state of disrepair, reflecting the general trend that Western Cape schools, particularly those in urban and peri-urban areas, are generally better resourced than those in the Eastern Cape, for example. Certainly none of the most serious forms of deprivation described in the School Register of Needs exists, such as a lack of water or electricity at the school. Nevertheless, ex-DET schools are desperately short of funds and some exhibit signs of neglect, such as flaking paint, broken windows and doors without handles. There is a serious lack of stationery such as pencils, pens, rubbers, writing books because the Department supplies only a few of each. Learners are forced to use the same exercise books for different subjects. Teaching aids such as overhead projectors, flipcharts, audio-visual materials such as tape recorders, television, video recorders, etc., are a luxury few schools can afford.

As a result of some learners home background (i.e. low socio-economic status) teachers have adopted a policy of not insisting on a proper school uniform when it is clear that the child cannot afford to have one. There is also a considerable number of too-young learners aged 5., who tend not to wear a school uniform and that they also have an element of being noisy in the class and they pose a serious problem for the teachers in terms of discipline and they are often ignored by the teachers because of their constant lack of participation and concentration This, according to the teachers, is as a result of a shortage of pre-schools in the community.

7. OUR POSITION

The classes observed in the present research project can usefully be divided into linguistically diverse and linguistically homogeneous classes. Each category will be examined in and for itself before comparisons are made between them. This is in order to do justice to the particularity of each at a time of rapid social transition, including demographic shift and changing enrolment patterns. Throughout, the focal question will be: which problems, in these classrooms are directly or indirectly attributable to language or to LoLT? A second focus is the question of literacy approaches, and their contribution to learning problems. From a research point of view it was impossible to set aside personal biases and professional opinions about what constituted a `problem'. All we could do, therefore, was to be explicit about our assumptions about good teaching and learning. These necessarily formed a kind of template against which classroom practice, and the teacher's views, were measured:

- ✍ Whole Language principles[7], in particular that learning proceeds from whole to part
- ✍ The stated philosophy of OBE, in particular, that (1) learners' needs should be met through various teaching strategies; (2) learners should be given enough time to meet their potential; (3) an anti-bias approach; (4) `Advancement of multilingualism[8] as a major resource, and the valuing of learners' home languages, cultures and literacies; other languages, cultures and literacies; and a shared understanding of a common South African culture' (DE 1997b)
- ✍ The seven critical outcomes undergirding Curriculum 2005, in particular: problem-solving through critical thinking, effective team or groupwork, effective communication; organisation and responsible self-management
- ✍ Key principles guiding curriculum development for ECD in particular integration, holistic development, relevance, participation and ownership, and a child-oriented approach
- ✍ Foundation Phase learning programme statements on Literacy, Numeracy, and Life Skills, and the insight that `language is not an end in itself, but a means to act in the world... An integrated approach to the implementation of the learning programme in the classroom will ensure that literacy is also developed in the learning programmes for numeracy and life skills' (DE 1997b: 10).

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[7]See Appendices.
[8] Understood by us as multilingual awareness and multilingual proficiency

SECTION TWO: FINDINGS

In this section we report on our findings as to the problems and challenges facing the classrooms we visited, and the coping strategies of teachers and schools. We try to be descriptive; but where we are critical, we attempt to justify our criticisms by measuring them against our assumptions, spelled out above. We should add that throughout, we have the greatest respect for the professional integrity of the teachers involved in this study, and are appreciative of their openness in allowing us into their classrooms. We will therefore try to be critically supportive of their work, often accomplished under extremely trying circumstances; any critical remarks are offered in a spirit of solidarity.

Problem	Found mostly in		Teacher's (school's) coping strategy
	ex-DEC Schools	ex-DET schools	
1. Communication breakdown/Gap between teaching and learning	X		Language support; interpreting; peer interpreting; grouping of learners
2. Discipline & control	X		Singing and chanting; team-teaching; detention
3. Cultural domination	X		Incipient multiculturalism: culture/ religion-specific days
4. Teacher's linguistic attitudes	X		Not addressed
5. Teacher's limitations in the LoLT	X		Not addressed
6. LoLT and the drive for English		X	Selected use of English
7. Multilingualism and non-standard varieties, including pronunciation		X	Focus on standard varieties & pronunciation
8. Learning support materials, including environmental print		X	Teachers produce their own; translate into African languages
9. Unfamiliarity with OBE/C2005	X	X	Workshops/INSET: teacher to remain on grade 1 level for 1999/2000
10. Literacy approaches	X	X	Focus on phonics: breakthrough method
11. Absence of a school language plan	X	X	Not addressed

Table 2: Typical language-related and literacy problems affecting teaching and learning at Grade 1 level

8. PROBLEMS IN ENGLISH- AND AFRIKAANS-MEDIUM CLASSROOMS
8.1 Communication breakdown: ex-DEC schools

Teachers in the ex-DEC schools express frustration at a situation in which they cannot communicate effectively with the majority of their learners. In a situation in which the teacher understands perhaps half a dozen words or phrases in Xhosa, and the learner knows only enough English or Afrikaans to follow the most basic instructions and to answer in monosyllables, interaction between teacher and learner is necessarily stunted.

> Last year I was absolutely desperate because I couldn't make the children understand when they came to school. That first term is crucial. They don't understand English and they don't understand classroom instructions.
> (Teacher C)

Children need a lot of scaffolding if they are to say anything at all in their additional language. This makes for painfully slow communication at times. More often than not, the teacher's perception that learners will not be able to answer in more than one or two words leads to a teacher-dominated

approach to learning. A more extreme example of this occurred at School C, where birthday boy Thabo [not his real name] is called to the front. There follows an awkward `dialogue' in which Teacher C does her best to engage Thabo in conversation by asking him (in English) about his birthday - how he celebrated it, who was there, what presents he got etc. Thabo is unable to respond except to nod or shake his head shyly to questions frequently requiring only a `yes' or `no' response. While the class boisterously sings Happy Birthday followed by Kumnandi Kuwe, Thabo has not been given the chance to use his primary language (Xhosa) to express himself in this instance. The result is an abbreviated interaction, frustrating on all sides.

Some teachers blame themselves for not knowing enough Xhosa. Others blame parents for enrolling their children in English and/or Afrikaans medium schools without considering the educational consequences. Others, again, hold the Department responsible for forcing schools to enrol children irrespective of their home language - a cornerstone of the new language policy. Teacher A, for instance, feels it is unfair on both herself and on the children to be facing each other across a language barrier. Are Xhosa-speaking children not hopelessly confused by being denied their moedertaal (mother tongue)? she asks. She says her job is to teach through the medium of English. She speaks of her inward dilemma: realising that what children need is the educational use of their home language, knowing she cannot provide it. She also recognises that her job would be on the line if a Xhosa-speaking teacher were to be appointed at the school.

Classroom interaction between learner and learner is severely stunted. While seating arrangements at tables ought to favour peer interaction such as pair work and group work, very little of this is practised. Once children return to their tables, they are more often than not required to do individual work such as filling in worksheets, copying something from the board, or cutting out letters or pictures from magazines. Hence one of the seven critical outcomes of C2005 is almost never met, namely effective team- or groundwork.

In an effort to control her children at all costs, the teacher mostly resorts to teacher-centred lessons in which children are seldom given the chance to initiate something. Teacher directed lessons are the norm, particularly in the ex-DEC schools. In School E, on the other hand, children are given greater freedom to work in groups. Teacher E also seems less worried about noise levels getting out of hand, and is able to call her class to order without having to shout. This brings us to the next point.

8.2. Discipline and control

A noticeable symptom of the communication breakdown between teacher and learners in ex-DEC classes is the prevalence of discipline problems. As Teacher C explains, `At the beginning of the year I would speak to them and they don't understand. I will have discipline problems.' These problems derive from the teacher's diminished authority over her charges at a time when they literally do not speak the same language. Teacher C attributes discipline problems to cultural factors.

> Because besides the language there is the cultural aspect. The children do tend to listen more to someone from their own cultural background. I think they have more respect for that particular person. Eventually they learn to respect you.
> (Teacher C interview)

What is important to note here is the teacher's perception that language competence, cultural background and discipline are linked. Discipline problems were much in evidence in several of the ex-DEC schools. Some teachers are forced to spend an inordinate amount of time controlling the children. Often teachers become little more than crowd-controllers, particularly in the latter part of the school day and on Fridays. In one particular lesson, Teacher Aa spends roughly one-quarter of

her time reprimanding the children, mostly in Afrikaans, once in Xhosa (`Yiz' apha!'). In Schools C and D, where Xhosa-speaking teaching assistants are present, it often falls to the assistant to rebuke an errant child. In one 45-minute observation period, Assistant C reprimanded individual learners (in Xhosa) a total of 13 times - this in addition to Teacher C's frequent reprimands. The effect, difficult to quantify but akin to a soccer match blown up by an overly zealous referee for every minor infringement, is one of constant interruption to the lesson flow, requiring a special type of concentration to overcome.

In line with the South African Schools Act prohibition on corporal punishment, teachers see themselves forced to resort to a range of sometimes innovative, sometimes draconian measures to control children. Such controlling takes various forms:
- a verbal reprimand
- singling out naughty children for special treatment, e.g. sitting in the front of the class, or standing with hands on head when everyone else is sitting.
- (threats of) detention
- chanting of instructions as if they were the words of a song, something that has a calming effect on the children

Disciplining can also take more covert forms. In one instance a bible song is used to reproach the boys. The girls are instructed to sing it first, thereby becoming collaborators in the discipline game.

> Jesus loves the [School C] girls
> with their little skirts and curls
> and he loves the [School C] boys even though they make a noise.
> (this last line accompanied by foot-stomping)
> Yes, Jesus loves me [x3
> the bible tells me so.

Sexism and regulated hatred masquerading as religion? Or harmless fun, with a bit of needle to liven things up? The children's enjoyment of the `noise' line suggests that no harm is intended. Yet these kinds of practices may convey powerful messages about gender roles and behaviour that run the real risk of perpetuating gender stereotypes and becoming self-fulfilling prophecies. In another example of overt disciplining, a secular rhyme is regularly chorused as follows:

> One, two, buckle my shoe
> ………
> Seven, eight, don't be late
> ………
> Thirteen, fourteen, stop your talking! [x2

By contrast, discipline appears to be less of a problem at School E (ex DET), where the teacher shares a home language with the children and appears to related more easily to them (she also lives where they do in the informal settlement adjacent to the school.   The corresponding rhyme in her class is chanted thus:

> One, two, buckle my shoes
> Seven, eight, go on straight
> Nine, ten, the big fat hen.[x2]

There is no line about stopping your talking!

8.3 Fears of cultural domination

There is some evidence of an incipient and spontaneous multiculturalism in some ex-DEC classrooms we observed. At School C, for instance, two of the sentences contained in the collective news book (updated daily), and copied by children into their own books, read, `Varisha told us about Indian culture. Ismail told us about Muslim culture.' On the whole, however, the issue of culture or multiculturalism is not structurally addressed by the schools. At another school this has become a problem, according to the teacher.

> Because we are predominantly black, our coloured children have a low self-image. Strangely enough. The black culture dominates: we have gum-boot dances... Something is happening to our coloured children.

What the teacher is alluding to here is the question of what is often called `coloured identity' in a changing social environment. In this sense the school is a microcosm of the Western Cape. The enforced racial separation of apartheid has almost overnight been replaced by an uneasy multiculturalism. The kind of issue raised here has profound implications for the whole school, and for the learning area of life skills within the classroom. It also serves to emphasise the need for researchers not to compartmentalise `language' issues from `cultural issues in a hermetic manner.

8.4 Monolingual & monocultural attitudes

Teachers in the ex-DEC schools are keenly aware of the language-related origins of many of the teaching and learning and behavioural problems in their (linguistically diverse) classrooms. However, teachers at times exhibit a lack of language awareness with regard to Xhosa in particular. In a context in which parents' desire for their children to learn English is overwhelming schools and teachers are under intense pressure to comply. Some ex-DEC schools are aware of the need to provide access to English while seeking to promote the, educational use of children's home languages, notably Xhosa. In the absence of (sufficient numbers of) Xhosa-speaking staff and a well-developed multilingual awareness, however, contradictions and inconsistencies are bound to arise.

The following example serves to illustrate the point in regard to the learning programme of Life Skills at School D, which has done more than most to accommodate Xhosa-speaking learners by appointing two Xhosa-speaking teachers. With the help of hand-drawn posters which she has stuck on the board, Teacher D tells the story (in English) of children who are taken to the school doctor for a routine medical check-up. The story is refreshingly appropriate for featuring Xhosa names of children (Sipho and Thandi), and goes some way towards undermining gender stereotypes by presenting a female doctor (who is `white') in addition to the black female nurse. However, at one point learners are told that `Sipho and Thandi did not understand what the doctor said because they don't understand English'. Children are required to repeat this line, as they do all the others. In checking for understanding afterwards, Teacher D says to the learners:

Teacher D:	Two children did not understand the nurse.
Learner 1:	Sipho and Thandi.
Teacher D (to one learner):	Hoekom het hulle nie die nurse verstaan nie?
Learner 2 (Nomezo, not the one addressed by the teacher):	They don't speak English.

Teacher D is being accommodating by addressing one of the learners in Afrikaans in checking for comprehension. There is a delicious irony in the fact that a Xhosa-speaking learner demonstrates her knowledge of both English and Afrikaans, whereas `Sipho' and `Thandi' (who are clearly meant to represent Xhosa-speaking children in ex-DEC schools) cannot understand English. More importantly, the exchange illustrates what Alexander, following Gogolin, has called the

`monolingual habitus'[9]- that is, the habit or practice of seeing the world from the vantage point of the dominant language in that society; to the exclusion of minority or marginalised languages. `Sipho' and `Thandi' are expected to know English; they don't, so they are seen to have a deficiency. Their home language (clearly intended to be Xhosa) is not taken into account; they are expected to accommodate the school, rather than the other way around. In this way the teaching of life skills, despite the best intentions of the teacher, ends up buttressing deficit models of education.

9. COPING STRATEGIES IN ENGLISH-AND AFRIKAANS-MEDIUM CLASSROOMS

Three coping strategies employed by teachers in the English- and Afrikaans-medium classes are briefly highlighted below. It should be noted that while peer interpreting is common to all five classrooms visited, Xhosa language, support, and the language-sensitive grouping of learners were observed in only two schools in each case. The question of how representative these latter strategies are, must therefore remained unanswered.,

	Teacher Aa (ex-HoR)	Teacher Ae (ex-HoR)	Teacher B (ex-HoR)	Teacher C (ex-HoA)	Teacher D (ex-HoR)
Coping Strategy	Afrikaans	English	English	English	English
Peer interpreting	X			X	X
Home language (Xhosa) support				X	X
Language-related grouping of learners	X		X		

Table 3: Coping strategies: English- and Afrikaans-medium classrooms

9.1 Peer interpreting

All five teachers in the ex-DEC classrooms use peer interpreting (LoLT to Xhosa) to bridge the largest gaps in oral interaction in the classroom, typically when it becomes clear that the learner has not understood the teacher's question or instruction. The teacher typically calls on the polyglot peer to `Tell her in Xhosa' (Teacher B) or `What is that in Xhosa' (Teacher Ae). Most teachers admit this is a desperation measure. We observed the strategy several times during numeracy groups in particular, in which those children fluent in both the LoLT and Xhosa were called upon to interpret for their friends who did not follow. This impromptu peer interpreting appeared to have mixed results, however, and is not without its problems. In some cases, the interpreter enabled the friend to answer the question; at other times, the interpreter appeared to go beyond the call of duty by giving the answer as well, thereby short-circuiting the process. In another instance, the polyglot learner appeared to have misunderstood the teacher's instruction:

> Teacher Ae: Everyone on the mat. Put down your pencil. What is that in Xhosa?
> Learner: Beka ipensile.
> Teacher Ae: Op die mat.

Teacher Ae appears to want the learner to interpret `everyone on the mat' into Xhosa; the learner has misunderstood this. Teacher Ae confirms this interpretation by repeating the first instruction in Afrikaans. Later in the same lesson Teacher Ae asks the learners, `What do you call a doctor in Xhosa' When the reply comes (ugqhirha), Teacher Ae gamely takes up the challenge. `Let me see if I can say ugqhirha.' Children clearly enjoy this validation of themselves.

A further example of the problems with peer interpreting occurred during a numeracy lesson at School Aa, where a bilingual child was required to interpret (Afrikaans to Xhosa) the simplest of

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[9] Personal communication.

Problems; 'As Mammie 7 appels gekoop het, en 3 raak vrot, hoeveel bly oor?' Teacher Aa's instruction to him was to interpret for the whole group of 10 seated on the mat; he lacked the confidence to do so, and turned only to the boy sitting next to him and spoke softly to him - so softly that it was virtually inaudible to anyone else.

9.2 Language support

Most of the ex-DEC schools offer some form of language support to `weaker' learners. At school C, for instance, all Grade 1 children ˉare tested for their English language proficiency at the start of the year. Those most at risk of failure are given extra lessons in English. Two schools have gone further than most in providing for language support for learners (and teaching support for teachers). The schools in question make use of bilingual Xhosa/English teaching assistants to ameliorate otherwise intractable communication problems of a very basic nature in the classroom. In general, the teaching assistants fill in many of the communication and learning gaps arising from the `linguistic mismatch' between teacher and learners. In both School C and School D, L1 Xhosa-speaking children constitute the vast majority of learners in the respective Grade 1 classrooms, and struggle with the official language of teaching (English). While Teacher C and Teacher D have made some effort to learn basic vocabulary items and phrases in Xhosa, neither by their own admission is able to use Xhosa for teaching and learning purposes.

School C, through its governing body, has employed a parent full-time since January 1997 to assist Teacher C with her Grade 1 class. Assistant C performs the following tasks on a day-to-day basis:

- ✍ interpreting teacher talk for the benefit of those children whose English is weak (English to Xhosa), in all three learning areas of the Foundation Phase (FP), i.e. literacy, numeracy, life skills
- ✍ interpreting learner talk for the teacher's benefit (Xhosa to English)
- ✍ reading and telling stories (in Xhosa) to the class, particularly to small groups of Xhosa-speaking learners
- ✍ teaching Xhosa sounds (phonics) and vocabulary related to the relevant Foundation Phase phaseorganiser, such as the family (e.g. umama - mother)
- ✍ providing translations (into Xhosa) of English sentences that make up the collective news book
- ✍ helping to control the children through a variety of verbal measures (in Xhosa), such as songs, reprimands, instructions related to classroom logistics such as seating

Thus Assistant C has a considerable degree of co-responsibility for the class. From our own observations and the interviews, the working relationship between Teacher C and Assistant C is a good one. They prepare lessons together each day after school, with Teacher C assuming the main responsibility. However, with Teacher C giving the lead in all respects in the classroom, this cannot justifiably be termed a team-teaching situation. Assistant C's lack of formal teaching qualifications may present an additional obstacle to full equality. At present, Assistant C's role as auxiliary is an important one that has made a major difference.

> I was very desperate at the beginning of last year. Once I found that I had a helper, immediately the situation eased up. Because besides the language there is the cultural aspect. The children do tend to listen more to someone from their own cultural background. I think they have more respect for that particular person. Eventually they learn to respect you. But [Assistant C's presence] definitely helps. At the beginning of the year I would speak to them and they don't understand. I will have discipline problems. As soon as [Assistant C] says something, the whole atmosphere changes. Especially in the first few weeks of Grade 1 it is essential to have a helper, a translator.
> (Teacher C Interview)

Assistant C's presence in the classroom, then, can be said to have had a humanising effect: it has improved basic communication between teacher and learners and taken the edge off discipline problems resulting from the communication breakdown Teacher C alludes to. In our observation, Assistant C is often seen by the children as a benign parent figure who quite literally understands the hurts and grievances and needs that Grade 1 children voice in the classroom. Her presence has also enabled learners to express themselves more freely when interacting with Teacher C, notably during `news time' when children are given the chance of relating a news item to the class.

Above all, the-presence and participation of Assistant C has-introduced the home language of the majority of the children-into the daily life of .the classroom. During our visits, an estimated 15% to 20% of all teaching time was in Xhosa as a result of Assistant C's interventions. While these are not always planned in advance, and hence do not constitute a systematic dual-language approach, they nevertheless have the effect of challenging School C's official English-only LoLT policy. One of the more innovative self-made materials we came across was a bilingual (English/Xhosa) news book in Teacher C's class. Every day the teacher adds one sentence (in English) generated from interaction with the children. The sentence is translated into Xhosa by Assistant C, written into the book. Children regularly have the chance to `read' (i.e. recite from memory, following the teacher) the book. Here both languages are validated in an integrative way; bilingualism is promoted; and children literally hear their own voices in Xhosa and see it in print.

Through a somewhat different route, School D has also attained the services of a full-time teaching assistant in Foundation Phase classes. A NGO concentrating on Science teaching, SAILI became involved at School D in order to provide additional Science teaching. As Teacher D explains, the NGO identified language as a stumbling block to learning:

> SAILI began here and saw we had language problems. For them it was a language problem - why children do so badly at school. Then they brought in people from [the neighbouring township] to translate. <
> (Teacher D Interview)

At School D, Assistant D fulfils a range of tasks largely similar to those performed by Assistant C at School C. These include interpreting from English to Xhosa for the learners' sake, and occasionally interpreting back from Xhosa into English for the teacher's benefit. Assistant D also helps check learners' individual work, reinforcing concepts Teacher D has introduced to the class as a whole. On occasion, when Teacher D is unable to be in class, Assistant D takes over - this despite her lack of formal training.

> When I'm not here, they tell me she's taking over. Maybe it's because I'm setting a good example, she's doing what I would be doing. She's actually very good, even though she's not qualified.
> (Teacher D Interview)

Two further aspects of Assistant D's work should be mentioned here. The first is that she· spends only approximately half her time in Teacher D's Grade I class - usually the first two hours of every day. The second half she spends in the other FP classes (Grades 2 and 3) assisting in similar ways, where her Xhosa/English bilingualism is most needed. What does Teacher D do when her Assistant has to leave for another class?

> Then I do things where I don't have to talk much, where children have to do more, such as writing. Or sometimes I'll read stories to them, even if they are in English. Some of them are able to follow by now.
> (Teacher D Interview)

By the teacher's own admission,, she s limited in her activities by the absence of her assistant. There can be no clearer indication of the need for ongoing language support in such (multilingual) situations.

A second feature of School D is that Teacher D and Assistant D have evolved a particular approach to dual language teaching that can usefully be termed duplication or `doubling up'. Almost everything Teacher D says (in English) to the class as a whole is  repeated by Assistant D in Xhosa. This occurs particularly when new concepts are introduced, or when known ones are revised, or when instructions are given. For example, Teacher D asks, `How many days of the week?' At a nod from her, Assistant D interprets almost immediately, `Zingaphi iintsuku zevekiT (Observation 11/6/98). One effect of this repetition is that children have two chances, of understanding everything of importance - the first time in English, the second in Xhosa, the L1 of the majority. The lesson also takes longer than it would have done if only one language had been used - although this is clearly a price the teacher is happy to pay in exchange for increased comprehension on the part of her learners:

> [The duplication] is not really a problem. Especially with OBE: you don't have to go where you want to, but where the child go.   They don't have to be able to add up to 10 by a specific time... Particularly with the interpreting - it may look as if it takes a bit of time, but it actually helps the time. Once you reach the next [grade] things will go more quickly with the next teacher.
> (Teacher D interview)

Apart from the time it takes, systematic duplication of instructions appears to have the serious consequence of undermining Teacher D's authority in the classroom. Children `tune out' to Teacher D's instructions and questions (in English) because they know that these will be repeated in Xhosa by Assistant D. When the latter is not there communication becomes very difficult, and Teacher D relies on peer interpreting to convey the most basic information.

While this type of dual-language teaching clearly requires some co-ordination in class, it does not necessarily entail joint preparation.

> We don't really prepare lessons together. [Assistant D] knows what I do, we simply fit in with each other.
> (Teacher D interview)

Assistant D testifies to enjoying the work, for which she is not formally qualified, although she admits to having difficulties with interpreting at times:

> ...sometimes it's very difficult to translate because you forget the word in Xhosa or just don't know the word totally in Xhosa.

Unlike Teacher D,   Assistant D lives in the township from which most of the children come adjacent to the school. This gives her access to the parents, and provides Teacher D with a ready source of information about children's home backgrounds. As Assistant D says, `I always report back to the teacher after I have visited the children at   home.   Assistant D also plays an important role in translating letters to parents into Xhosa.

For Teacher D, an interesting finding to have emerged from the presence of Assistant D is that she has been able to distinguish between language problems, on the one hand, and learning problems, on the other.

> But it is not only a language question. Some of the children have serious teaming difficulties... No matter what [Assistant D] and I might do, it simply does not get through to them.
> (Teacher D interview)

(In our own observation this statement is hard to corroborate. We do not necessarily agree that the form of dual-language duplication practised by Teacher D and Assistant D is making the best use of existing resources. A more effective language distribution in the school day might well make a - substantial difference to most learners' motivation and performance. This, in turn, would tend to point towards teaching methodology as a critical factor in affecting learning outcomes (including individual bilingualism), and would question a too-ready acceptance of learning difficulties amongst children. This issue is addressed more fully in the Recommendations section of this report.)

9.3. Grouping of learners

Most of the teachers group children according to their proficiency in the LoLT and/or learning outcomes. Children thus grouped into `ability groups' are usually seated together at their desks, and frequently do activities together. Some teachers recognise that in such large classes, groupwork `is the only way'. Teacher D, for example, has three groups of children, grouped according to their abilities in literacy and numeracy which happen to coincide. This suggests proficiency in the LoLT as an intervening factor, those who understand English well enough are able to follow in literacy and numeracy. However, the presence of Assistant D undermines this argument somewhat, as she interprets all concepts into Xhosa, with illustrations. Further research is needed to test these assumptions.

On the other hand, Teacher B has placed learners not in ability groups, but `strategically' according to how well they work together and are able to help each other, also with language:

> Where the need is great. For example next to Nomathemba, who cannot speak English at all, sit Weziwe and Siphiwo, who can chat endlessly. And they talk mostly in English. They can help her in English and in Xhosa. Now I'm going to move her because she's become so dependent on them. They do her work for her actually. I've been watching them[10]

While schools generally employ the same strategy in grouping their learners using ability, teachers do not always acknowledge that this is their own practice. In School H where the same strategy was used the teacher was asking learners questions and there was a group of learners that were not participating in the activity. We thought those were the slow learners and we were shocked to learn from the teacher that in actual fact that was the fast group, Teacher H when interviewed said that she did not employ the `old' method of grouping learners according to ability, but then we had observed and heard from her during our observations that she was still using the `old' method.

10. PROBLEMS AND COPING STRATEGIES IN EX-DET SCHOOLS

	Teacher E Xhosa	Teacher F Xhosa	Teacher G Xhosa	Teacher H Sotho	Teacher J Tswana
Accommodating English	X	X	X	X	X
Correcting non-standard usage				X	X
Compensating for inappropriate or inadequate materials	X	X	X	X	X

Table 4: Coping strategies: Xhosa-, Sotho- and Tswana-medium classrooms

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[10] Children's names have been changed to protect their identities, in accordance with the practice adopted in this report.

10.1 LoLT & the drive for English

In all the ex-DET schools the home language is the LoLT at Grade 1 level. Some teachers are aware that if is the best way to educate learners. In School F the teacher quoted an example of a learner who was withdrawn from the school to go to a former coloured school, who had since come back because the parents realised that he was not coping. Generally/learners are ahead in these schools in comparison to multilingual ex-DEC schools because of the use of the mothertongue, and as the teacher to School J mentioned, because she uses the mother tongue, she can stretch her learners to the fullest. She does not feel that they are too young for anything, and when she-does stretch them the learners surprise her.

Despite ex-DET schools' adherence to the home language as the main LoLT in the Foundation Phase, there is increasing pressure to introduce English ‹into the curriculum - the earlier, the better. Often English is randomly introduced in an oral form at Grade 1 level and there seems to be no clear guidelines as to how much teaching and learning should be done in the home language and how much in English. As a result, teachers rely on their intuitions as to when and how much English to introduce in the Grade 1 classroom.

By way of illustration: in School E the teacher uses mostly Xhosa in her Grade 1 class. However, English is also used to teach key concepts in numeracy, such as the operational signs (`udibanisa/plus'), and numbers from 1-20; life skills concepts such as the parts of the human body (Xhosa/English, e.g. head/intloko also chanted in an English rhyme: `Head and shoulders, knees and toes...'), the five senses (drilled in English. e.g. `I hear with my ... ?' `Ears'), family names (e.g. mother, brother, sister). Numbers are also `Xhosa-fled', as in `zi-two', for example, and months of the year are derived from the English name, e.g. `Juni'. A considerable proportion of the print environment is in English (posters - commercial and home-made), while labels on classroom objects appear in two languages, e.g. ucango, door, chalkboard, ifestile, udonga. Rhymes such as `One, two, three, four, five / Once I caught a fish alive',' and `This little girl is ready for bed', as well as `From left to right' are chanted in English. Prayers- are said in Xhosa, however.

By way of contrast, numeracy practices in the ex-DET schools demonstrate the benefits of 'mother-tongue instruction', i.e. the educational value of the home language in the teaching and learning of concepts. Most of the time teachers use the question and answer method to teach numeracy. Word sums are discussed in the home language and children are encouraged to count 'mentally ' (in their heads). In one particular class learners have no problem with counting from 1-50; impressively, some even manage it backwards. In another School, Teacher J explains the meaning of the multiplication concept in Sotho, moving from addition to multiplication. Learners could work out a number of sums which we thought were rather difficult for Grade 1, e.g.

1. 3X3 (thathu baba raru)
2. 2X5 (bedi baba hlano)
3.

In all these sums children easily gave the correct answer. The teacher explained that the learners have no problem understanding because their language is known to them. Sometimes the teacher uses Xhosa because there are some children who have Xhosa as a home language.

10.2 Multilingualism, language varieties & pronunciation

In the ex-DET schools learners are exposed to a number of African languages besides Xhosa, in such a way that they do not know at times that they are using a Zulu or Xhosa word. The problem with this is that the teachers want the learners to speak their home language `without mixing it with any other.' In school F the teacher was asking learners to describe what they saw in some pictures of the OBE workbook. One picture was that of a gun and one learner bravely said `ubona isibhamu' (I

see a gun). The teacher was quick to correct the learner. She said that isibhamu is not a Xhosa word. Another learner said `i-gun'. The teacher again told them that is still not a Xhosa word. In the end one learner said `Umphu' and the teacher was satisfied with the answer. This insistence on the standard variety does not appear to encourage multilingualism, however; nor would not help in the development of African languages. Teachers want learners to speak African languages `correctly' without using any borrowed words, or other words from other African languages that refer to the same thing.

In School J the teacher mentioned that her main problem was with the learners who mixed Xhosa and Sotho. She said as soon as she realises that a learner has weak Sotho then she will make sure that she gives her as much attention as possible. According to her the learners are immersed in a Xhosa environment, so their parents have sent them to School J so that they can learn Sotho and even though she has some learners who speak Xhosa she uses Sotho mpst of the time. She tries though to accommodate the Xhosa speakers because she can speak Xhosa, but then she said just like us who spoke a language other than Xhosa and we could understand what was going on in the classroom, even the Xhosa speakers understand.

The teacher at School H appeared to accommodate some of the Xhosa speakers, even though it is a Tswana school. One day she was teaching about boys and girls and then she drew pictures to show what they looked like. She then came to us to ask for their Xhosa spellings. Even when she gives individual learners attention she says that `I have to speak Xhosa to this one because she has forgotten Tswana.' I suppose she is doing this `subconsciously'. She would not speak to the Tswana learners in Xhosa, probably for the same `purist' reason mentioned earlier.

In the schools where there are learners who speak a language other than the one that is used as the medium (Schools H and J) the teachers have communication problems. For example when the teacher tries to teach vowels e.g. -o-, it becomes difficult. The OBE workbook the teacher has been supplied with assumes that -o- will be pronounced the same in all languages, yet this is not the case. In some African languages for instance, it is pronounced -u-.

The same applies to the pronunciation of some consonants. In Teacher H's language lesson, for example, the syllable -li- is pronounced -di- but then the teacher has to accommodate some of the learners who speak Xhosa, and who pronounce the syllable as it is. Other sounds which pose problems are -r- and -g-. Learners at times transfer the Tswana or Sotho pronunciation of this sound to English. Another word where learners tend to transfer pronunciation is `three' and in School F for instance, the teacher took some time trying to teach her learners not to say `cree'. Even the teacher herself struggles to pronounce this sound, but because she is the model for the leamers they will accept what she says is right. Closely related to this problem is one about accents. For instance in Tswana learners find it difficult to pronounce the syllable `the', transferring their Tswana pronunciation `de'.

10.3 Learning Support Materials
As indicated, there is a general shortage of learning support materials for teachers implementing OBE for the first, time. Teachers have to rely more on finding or making their own materials. Sometimes the pressure of time is too great and teachers use inappropriate material, for example a newspaper clipping that is too difficult linguistically, even though of high interest level in terms of content.   Teachers rely heavily on commercial glossy magazines, the majority of which seem inappropriate for young children (You, Huisgenoot, Rooi Rose, .Cosmopolitan). Even magazines for Black adult readers (Drum, Next) purvey values that seem in conflict with an anti-bias (in this ease anti-sexist) approach, for example. An exception is Molo Songololo, which is sold to children at School B.

Very few of the classrooms we visited had book corners. This is partially a result of the cramped space owing to the large numbers of learners. Many of the books seem culturally inappropriate: old readers, very British-looking representations of nuclear families. One teacher has the PREP pack, but does not use it because she does not like it. Several teachers complain that there is no ready substitute for the readers (e.g. Beehive scheme) used in previous years . With many teachers emphasising `listening skills' and the notion that oral language has to be learnt before print, there is a noticeable absence of reading in virtually all the classes we visited. In our observation Grade 1 children generally do very little reading, particularly of stories.

The issue of a serious lack of learning materials particularly in the African languages is a factor which is constantly hammered by the teachers in the ex-DET schools. They report that the department expects them to help find, develop and create materials for the learners and is thus avoiding its own responsibility in this regard. Because of the high learner:teacher ratios, teachers claim not to have the time to be able to .help the learners find enough and adequate materials for learning. An additional obstacle is the serious lack of parental support in the teaming of their children. Parents are seen not to have the time commitment and the financial resources to help provide relevant materials for their children. Some teachers do take the trouble and the effort to collect learning support materials,-in some cases going so far as to organise fundraising activities. Some schools have also approached the private sector in this regard.

Language plays a crucial role in determining the suitability of materials, and frequently becomes an obstacle. Materials are mostly in English or Afrikaans, and teachers complain that while they do adapt some materials, adaptation into African Languages is a very difficult and time-consuming task. Others say materials are unworkable when translated because they lack originality and authenticity, and they make particular reference to the departmental materials on OBE which they say have been translated from English to African languages. In this regard they cite an example whereby mono- or bi-syllabic words in English could be two-or three-or even four-syllable words in Xhosa, for instance in teaching sounds using the letter -c-: carrot, cancer, car, can. Translated into Xhosa all these extend to more than one syllable, e.g., carrot = umnqathe, cancer = isifo somhlaza, car = ingwelo, can = itoti. This means that one has to look for words that are different in meaning but have the same number of syllables and which do not necessarily begin with a -c-. In School G the teacher complained about the fact that it seemed material was being translated from English. In the workbook learners were supposed to learn the sound -b-, and the picture next to the sound was that of a ball. In Xhosa the teacher automatically has to teach double consonants from the beginning because a ball is ibhola, which has three vowel sounds.

At times the materials translated from English make a number of generalisations. They do not take into consideration that some concepts are not conveyed in African languages in the same manner as in English , for example, making a distinction between `he', `she', and `it'. In African languages, one morpheme is used and the speaker needs to state whether a person is male or female.

Even where Xhosa-language learning support materials are provided, they are sometimes antiquated or inappropriate. An OBE workbook on life skills, for example, is written_ in `deep' Xhosa, an does not reflect the everyday spoken variety of the urban areas. Teacher E's Life Skills book features the following terms next to images of a phone, a radio, and a TV set, respectively: ucingo, unomathotholo, umabonakude. Yet Teacher E, in explaining the worksheet to her learners, refers to ifoni, iradio, and iTV, respectively. A 1974 Xhosa textbook from which Teacher E makes photocopies of worksheets, similarly employs outdated terminology which confuses learners. These examples point to the urgent need to pursue the standardisation of the African languages for purposes of acquisition as already identified in the LANGTAG report (1996).

Teacher	Table 5: Typical examples of Learning Support Material used in Grade 1 Learning Programmes					
	Literacy		Numeracy		Life Skills	
	Material	Lang	Material	Lang	Material	Lang
Aa - LoLT: Afrikaans	Flashcards of alphabet letters	n/a	*My nuwe wêreld van wiskunde.* Bk 1 Gr.1. Volmink, Moore, Lottering, Collinge (Kagiso, n.d.)	Afrik	'Dentazyme' poster	Eng
Ae - LoLT: English	Oxford Reading Tree series (1989): *The Chase; The Water Fight*	Eng.	Number chart 1-100	n/a	Chart with 'My Family' pictures (nuclear family)	Eng
B - LoLT: English	*The Phonics Handbook* - Sue Lloyd (Jolly Learning, Clugwell, UK, 1992)	Eng.	Dice, whiteboards, counters	n/a	*Myself; All in the Family; Our School* (all by Ace Lifeskills)	Eng
C - LoLT: English	*On Track with English. Learner's Book. Grade 1* Mohamed & Minkley (Phumelela, 1998) *Get Going with English. Grade 1.* Comrie, Maqungo, Stevens. (Kagiso, 1997)	Eng. Eng.				
D - LoLT: English	Set of 5 Sunny Day Readers (MML Primary English Programme): *Wanda's friendly watermelon; Fluffy puppy tells her story; I can read; Five friends; Words and pictures.*	Eng.			Department of Education Gr.1 workbooks (Myself; Taking Care; Messages).	Eng
E - LoLT: Xhosa	*Sifunda isiXhosa* - Nabe, Mdledle, Jolobe (Educum, Johannesburg, 1974)	Xho	Card with instruction, 'Zoba udibanise'	Xho	Isebe Lemfundo. Ibakala 1. *Incwadi Yemizetyenzana.* Imiyalezo isiXhosa	Xho
F - LoLT: Xhosa	*Imizamo* (textbook). Magazines, an old vowel chart	Xho	No workbooks. Photocopies from a publisher's Workbook. No prescribed works.	?	No prescribed books. Magazines that suit topics and the Phase Organiser, e.g. The First Aid Kit	
G - LoLT: Xhosa	Flashcards Story books from the library	Xho			Imiyalezo, Ukunonophela, Mna (Workbooks: Children) *Isiseko* (Juta story book)	Xho
H - LoLT: Xhosa	No Tswana teaching materials. Available materials in Xhosa with English manuals	Xho Eng	Pictures from magazines	n/a	*Life Skills Grade 1* OBE Workbook (Shuter & Shooter)	
J - LoLT: Xhosa	Word store, sentence maker, sentence holder New Successful English	Eng	*Successful Numeracy. Grade 1* (Oxford)	Eng	*Out and About. OBE Grade 1* (Oxford)	Eng

11. PROBLEMS COMMON TO ALL CLASSROOMS VISITED
11.1 OBE/C2005

The implementation of outcomes-based education/Curriculum 2005 in this its first year has been hi 1 uneven. On t e one an , teachers views reveal widespread disillusionment about the process by which OBE has been implemented. Teachers complain about the apparent confusion with regard to OBE within the ranks of the Department, resulting in inadequate in-service training and mixed messages and a perceived lack of support from subject advisors. For teachers in the ex-DET schools, the main communication problem with the WCED is that that there are no Xhosa-speaking subject advisors. According to them all the advisors speak either Afrikaans or English and do not understand some of the problems that the teachers have. At times they write down the teachers' complaints and promise, to look into them, but do not come up with a solution. At other times when they visit the schools they only speak to the heads of departments and the other teachers are not updated about the visit.

There is some resentment about the obscure terminology in which OBE is couched. Teachers feel let down by the lack of provision of learning support materials. They also complain that their need to familiarise themselves with OBE will prevent them from moving up with their Grade 1 classes to Grade 2 in 1999, even though moving up `has great psychological value for the children' (Teacher B). An additional complaint from teachers in the ex-DET schools is that the terminology is not available in African languages. African languages speaking teachers are forced to use and adapt Afrikaans-language OBE materials in their classrooms due to a serious lack of learning materials in African languages. On the other hand, a few teachers' reactions towards the new curriculum itself are cautiously positive, with some ex-DEC teachers seeing its learning potential.

While it is clear that OBE has not been ignored in the schools in this survey, it has also not transformed teaching and learning in hoped-for ways. Instead, it has bred resentment amongst teachers struggling with curriculum renewal in the face of large classes and a generally crisis-riddled atmosphere. Teachers seem to have to make do with very little substantive support from the Department, whether materially or in terms of training. Implementation has been on a trial-and-error basis.

We now need to turn to the learning programmes themselves. Since it is the stated philosophy of OBE to advance multilingualism as a major resource, and to value learners' home languages, cultures and literacies, the pertinent question we asked ourselves was: To what extent do the practices and views of the teachers affirm, alternatively contradict, this stated aim of OBE?

11.2 Literacy & the phonics focus

Teachers testified that of the three learning programmes for the foundation phase, literacy, and phonics in particular presented the most problems. Every teacher spends large chunks of her time on literacy activities which centre around the `phonics philosophy' of `sounding out' letters and words and in the process moving from part to whole via pattern drills, both orally and in writing. A typical example would be for the teacher to ask children to identify initial sounds, middle sounds and final sounds in semantically unconnected words such as man, cat, bag, wag, sing, six, ten, bang, pot (in English), and sif, mot, bul (in Afrikaans), or to ask children to come up with their own words featuring a particular letter such as -g-, e.g. igoboghobho, gila, gula, godola (in Xhosa). Children are immediately bored to distraction by the repetition of sounds and letters, and the effort of bringing the two together in decontextualised settings.

What is palpably clear to the observer is the excruciatingly slow pace at which learning happens when phonics are taught, especially in additional language environments. Bloch et al (1995) note that even L1 users of LoLt often have difficulty with phonics. This problem is exacerbated in ESL contexts, since English is only approximately 70% phonically regular and many of the most

frequent words (e.g. `the', `once', `enough') and even some names (e.g. `George', `Kathy') cannot be decoded by `sounding out' the letters that make up the words. In our observation, all the teachers in the ex-DEC schools experienced difficulties when teaching phonics. It is arduous work, and yields low return &. ' The merits or otherwise of a phonics-dominated approach to print are not at issue here. What is important to note is the. difficulties teachers in linguistically diverse classes encounter with phonics, especially in English, but also in Afrikaans. A complicating factor here is that of pronunciation. When a child calls out `Jam Alley' and the teacher understands this to have been `Germany', pronunciation becomes an issue: the unexpected (for the teacher) flattening of the -a- vowel results in a momentary miscommunication. In this context phonics becomes synonymous with a particular variety of standard spoken South African English, and takes little, account of children's own pronunciation. Thus on occasion pronunciation becomes an issue in the multilingual classroom, when teachers feel that it may confuse children with their spelling if not checked. Teacher Aa is quite explicit that this is the reason, whereas Teacher D implies it when correcting children's pronunciation of `tin', which to her sounds like `teen'.

Since the learning area of literacy is dominated by phonics very little time remains for stories. Stories often become gap-fillers at the end of the day once the `real work' has been done and children are restless. For stories serve to quieten children down. For example, teacher D says she reads one page of one story to her class per day, at the end of the day when children cannot concentrate anymore. In the ex-DET schools in particular, there are often no books for children; and even when there is a story book or two, it is the teacher who reads to the children. While all teachers make some use of stories, their potential for literacy learning remains largely unfulfilled. As Bloch 1998 points out, hearing and telling stories has shown itself to be the single most effective approach to promoting literacy in young children in Britain and elsewhere.

Approaches to literacy in the ex-DET schools are similarly characterised by a move from part to whole. Teachers typically start by teaching vowels, then single consonants, double consonants, and finally complete words. At the start of the year a heavy emphasis is placed on writing patterns so that children learn how to hold a pen. In most of the schools that we visited, learners were mostly taught to identify vowels and consonants. We observed very little reading activity and very little writing. Most of the time the teachers use the question and answer method and the lessons were done orally.

Teachers in the ex-DET schools at least have the advantage of sharing the same home language/s with the children. While pattern drills are the order of the day (e.g. copying the letter -r- many times neatly between the lines of a `worksheet'), the use of children's home languages coupled with more learner-centred methods occasionally facilitates a more creative lesson in which children are enabled to express themselves. During a reading lesson at School H the teacher translated a story written in English, The Little Red Hen, into Tswana. She employed role play in the home language which added greatly towards understanding the story. It was interesting to see learners choose the roles they want to play, instead of the teacher assigning them.

In School J the teacher uses the breakthrough method to teach reading and writing. Children are made to form their own sentences and thereafter use them to practise writing. They construct and read the sentences as opposed to reading or copying what has been prepared by somebody else. This makes space for creativity and imagination because learners can pick words and make sentences. Small groups are also formed to give learners individual attention and each learner is supposed to go to the front and write his/her own sentence. The teacher insists that when children read words they should point at them. She emphasises that reading should not just be singing, learners should separate the words.

However, poor teaching methods often undermine intended outcomes of literacy lessons even when the home language is used. In School G, for example, we observed a lesson where the teacher was teaching learners how to write the letter -d-. She drew a picture of a duck and used it to illustrate how the -d- was to be written. She explained the concept in Xhosa and emphasised that the duck should face the front and its tail should be at the back and its feet should be long. The method was a little confusing because when the learners attempted to write their own -d- on the board, they tried to decorate it in imitation of the teacher's illustration. The teacher's strategy was to take those ahead to teach them first; she said they would help to teach the slower ones. The rest of the class was watching and not concentrating on what she was doing. When the first group was called to come and write on the board they still did not know how to write the -d-.

11.3 Classroom print environment

In general, classrooms in the ex-DEC schools are far better resourced in terms of the visual and print environment than their counterparts in the ex-DET schools - an obvious legacy of discriminatory resourcing under apartheid, and of the socio-economic status of the respective school communities. In the ex-DET schools most of the classroom walls are virtually bare of pictures and posters and exhibit an impoverished print environment. Posters are mostly/in English and some in Afrikaans, with very few in the African languages. The teachers attribute this to the serious lack of resources in the African languages. A number of other pictures and charts on the walls have no direct relevance to the learning needs of their learners and only serve to decorate the classroom.

An exception in this regard is School E, newly built in partnership between government and the private sector. Teacher E's class has more materials than most other ex-DET classrooms. The print environment is almost equally balanced between Xhosa and English-language materials, which include commercial alphabet and vocabulary posters in Xhosa, a home-made `Duty board" with daily chores written in English, e.g. `Open and close windows'; a home-made weather chart, with the month and one-word descriptions in Xhosa, e.g. `Juni' Kuyabanda'; labels of classroom objects, in Xhosa and English, e.g. ucango, door, chalkboard, ifestile, udonga; and home-made posters of the main colours, with names written in English, i.e. red, yellow, green, blue, orange.

In two of the five ex-DEC classrooms we visited, the dominant impression gained with respect to the print environment is that it is overwhelmingly English. This points to the obvious prestige of English in terms of book production and commercial poster production, and the almost complete marginalisation of the African languages. Thus the English-language stream at School A has posters in English only. Similarly, Teacher B's Grade 1 classroom has almost exclusively English on the walls and on classroom objects, e.g. `this is a chair'. The other ex-DEC classrooms visited have begun to reflect the teachers' efforts at accommodating the multilingual composition of their learners, specifically through Xhosa in print. Examples include monolingual (Xhosa), bilingual (Xhosa/English) and trilingual (Xhosa/English/Afrikaans) commercial posters and wall-charts such as alphabet charts, the labelling of classroom furniture and other objects (Xhosa/English), Xhosa language learning newspaper inserts, number posters (in Xhosa), a photo-pack with a teacher guide in all 11 official languages, and even bilingual, hand-written instructions (on the chalkboard) to learners to `Write your name' / `Bhala igama lakho'.

Despite the recognition of children's languages as reflected in the print environment of some classrooms, teachers seldom refer to what is on their walls. While the print environment seems proportional to the relative socio-economic status of the school community, teachers across the board appear to regard posters and charts more as decoration than as learning support material. In this sense there is an under-utilisation of scarce resources.

11.4 Teaching methods
In teaching all the above, teachers most of the time teachers use the question and answer method. The teacher is still considered all knowing, and learners come to school to listen to what the teacher has to teach them. Even though m some of the schools we visited the teachers and learners all spoke one language (Xhosa, Sotho, or Tswana, respectively), there were some communication problems that we observed. In School F the teacher was teaching the learners to make a distinction between left and right and she said that `the right hand is the one that you use when you eat.'

Teacher	Teaching experience (years)			Class size	LoLT at Grade 1	Teacher's home language	Learners by home language					
	1-4	5-9	10+				E	A	X	S	T	oth
Aa ex-DEC			X	40	Afrikaans	Afrikaans		15	22	3		
Ae ex-DEC			X	47	English	Afrikaans	none available - teacher resigned					
B ex-DEC			X	43	English	Afrikaans	9	1	33			
C ex-DEC			X	41	English	English	12		27			2
D ex-DEC	X			33	English	Afrikaans	1	5	26	1		
E ex-DET	X			45	Xhosa	Xhosa			43	2		
F ex-DET				35	Xhosa	Xhosa			35			
G ex-DET			X	52	Xhosa	Xhosa			52			
H ex-DET			X	46	Tswana	Tswana					46	
J ex-DET		X		38	Sotho	Sotho		4	5	24	5	
K ex-DET		X		51	Xhosa	Xhosa			51			

Table 6: Project teachers: teaching experience, class size, LoLT, learners by home language

On a more general level, while it was not the intention of the research to evaluate teachers' performances it proved impossible to avoid noticing that on the whole teachers fared poorly as facilitators of learning.   Notwithstanding constraints such as large classes and the demands of the new curriculum, teachers generally do not measure up against the following guidelines of what we considered to be `good practice':
✍ acknowledging the different languages and dialects in the class (language awareness)
✍ working with existing multilingualism in the classroom, i.e. drawing on learners' existing languages as learning resources
✍ managing learning in groups
✍ creative use of learning materials
✍ enabling cognitively demanding learning to take place

Children are consistently underestimated by teachers in terms of their cognitive/intellectual capacity. This was most evident where LoLT is not an obstacle i.e. in the ex-DET classrooms, but extends to ex-DEC classrooms also and includes reading, writing and numeracy lessons, where in some cases children after 8 months of schooling were still adding up 2+2.   Even in those relatively privileged classrooms with `only' 30+ learners, the teaching approach was invariably teacher-centred and allowed for very little initiative on the part of the children. It is clearly a case of

outdated teaching approaches that have not been challenged thoroughly enough, and asks awkward questions of the teaching methods and literacy approaches passed on by teacher education colleges in the last decade (four of the teachers in this survey received their diplomas within this time). For longer serving teachers, in-service provision in the last few years has clearly also failed to change ingrained practices in this regard. While teachers exert themselves to the utmost, often under extremely trying conditions, learners are rarely fully engaged. The result is a tragic waste of human potential. While much teaching happens, very little learning appears to occur. However, teachers should not be made the scapegoats for this systemic failure, which clearly requires a systemic response.

By the time of our final round of visits in August/September, we were pleasantly surprised to find a sprinkling of better practices. While the basic problems identified above remained, it appeared that some teachers (and schools) had begun to come to terms with OBE; and their multilingually composed classes. Teacher Aa, for instance, made very effective use of group work in facilitating co-operative learning amongst her L1 Afrikaans- and L1 Xhosa-speaking children. In Teacher B's numeracy period a group of children were absorbed in a game of addition involving the throwing of dice, while Teacher E's (Xhosa-speaking) class proved adept at accurately estimating the number of sticks heaped up on the floor during a numeracy lesson. We also learned that Teacher E had contributed to a series of graded readers by Via Afrika entitled, *Our Voices* (available only in English, but to be translated). At School H, the teacher employed a bilingual approach in teaching an English poem translated into Tswana (the LoLT), and recited by the children in their home language. At School J (Sotho-medium), learners were progressing well with their literacy and were able to build their own sentences via the breakthrough method. At School C, Teacher C was able to take up a child's spontaneous contribution to the phonics lesson, and also made space for children (in pairs) to share experiences about a video they had watched. Even more forward-looking was the full-time appointment, in July, of a Ll Xhosa-speaking teacher to teach Xhosa as a subject from Grade 1 right through to Grade 7.

11.5 School language plans and policies

Our final round of visits in August/September confirmed an earlier impression namely that none of the schools had consciously aligned their language plans, policies and practices with the new LiEP, which by that stage had been made public for more than a year. All schools do have a language policy of sorts, even if by default. However, this appears to have evolved more in response to 'realities on the ground' over the past few years, such as staff language proficiency and parental preference for high-status languages, than as a result of any contextualisation of the new LiEP. Concretely, none of the schools was able to state that they had arrived at a new integrated policy for language/s of learning and teaching, languages as subjects, languages of administration, assessment, and staffing. Several of the teachers interviewed indicated that the school had not-yet received a copy (Schools H & J), or that teachers were left to decide on their own language plan (School G) within the general guideline of maintaining the mother tongue in the Foundation Phase while introducing English orally (in Gr.l) and in writing (in Grade 3). One School (F) has had a consultation, but this has thus far led nowhere due to the absence of a constitution for the school. Of the ex-DEC schools, Schools C and D have moved some way towards promoting multilingualism via the Xhosa-speaking language support staff, and by appointing two bilingual (L1 Xhosa speaking) staff members, respectively.

12. RECOMMENDATIONS

The implications for the improvement of teaching and learning both in linguistically diverse and in linguistically homogeneous classrooms and schools, are clearly numerous, and the challenges enormous if the aims and objectives of the new language-in-education policy and of the new curriculum are to be realised. Many of these implications and challenges have already been identified and explicated more fully by, amongst others, De Klerk 1996, Heugh et al 1995,

LANGTAG 1996, Bloch et al 1996, Heugh 1998, and by the national Department of Education through its recent Implementation Plan (1998). Hence, in what follows, only a few salient recommendations will be made. Fortunately, we are able to draw on the work of NGOs such as the National Language Project, ELTIC and PRAESA, amongst others, who between them have produced a small but growing repertoire of strategies for use in (particularly) multilingual primary school classrooms.

12.1 At classroom level

For teachers at classroom level, the biggest challenge would be to shift their beliefs about, and attitudes towards, the African languages, and to use these as learning resources across the curriculum and throughout schooling. African languages should come to be seen as viable codes for learning at all levels. Most immediately, teachers in multilingually composed classrooms should create forms of language awareness appropriate to their situation. Doing an informal. survey of the languages learners speak, and finding space to play. with the different languages, would only be the first steps in affirming them, and thereby their speakers. Many of the suggestions listed in The Power of Babel (De Klerk 1996) are relevant here, such as collecting stories and books and other resources in the languages that learners speak, and encouraging children to use their home languages in the classroom. '

Forms of `cultural awareness' could fruitfully complement such language awareness campaigns. In an effort to combat growing xenophobia and promote tolerance. such awareness programmes could be extended to ex-DET schools, particularly those which have admitted (black) foreigners from other African countries.

The attitudinal shift required of speakers of African languages is even more profound if bilingual and multilingual learning is to flourish. Teachers in ex-DET, classrooms should be encouraged to regard the mother tongue or home language as the main vehicle for cognitive and emotional growth, certainly in the General Education phase (Grades 1-9). Amongst other things, this means promoting literacy practices and doing (written) assessment in African languages beyond the Foundation Phase. It is vital that children learn to read and write at cognitive) demanding levels in their home languages across the curriculum, and to have the choice of being assessed in their home language from Grade 4 upwards.

Teachers in linguistically diverse classrooms should also be encouraged to explore the grouping of their learners in linguistically-sensitive ways that encourage co-operative learning via peer interpreting. It is vitally important that African language speaking children not be stigmatised by 'being 'ghettoised into their `own' groups throughout the school day. Furthermore, teachers in such classrooms should rope in parents and other volunteers as teaching assistants wherever possible, particularly in order to bridge intractable language-related communication problems.

12.2 At school level

Many of the steps indicated above will only become fully possible once a school develops its own language plan in keeping with the new LiEP and the new curriculum, and finds ways of monitoring its realisation and supporting teachers in doing so. School management through the governing body plays a pivotal role in this regard, and will have to convince parents of the merits of using the home languages as vehicles of learning (plus transition to English and/or Afrikaans), amongst other things. Additional aspects schools should be considering include the following:

1. Conduct a language survey to determine the home languages of learners & parents' preferences
2. Organise training for peer interpreters in schools where teachers and significant numbers of learners do not have a language in common.
3. Appoint language volunteers, e.g. from the ranks of retired teachers or parents.

4. Share resources with neighbouring schools by clustering (minimally twinning) - this could lead to an exchange or sharing of teaching (including OBE) materials; marking loads; exam & test question-papers; language (& other) expertise.
5. Introduce Xhosa as a subject (ex-DEC schools).
6. Appoint L1 speakers of African languages (to ex-DEC schools), not only for teaching Xhosa as a subject but as class teachers (Foundation Phase) and subject teachers (Intermediate Phase upwards).
7. Introduce family literacy classes or courses.
8. Link up with NGOs to promote quality education and teachers' reflective teaching practice.

Mechanisms need to be found to encourage English- and Afrikaans-speaking teachers to do conversational courses in the most relevant African language.

In addition, primary school teachers in particular should be targeted for English enrichment lessons in order to meet the demands o teat rig their learning programmes and subjects through the medium of this language. While the need is greatest amongst L1 speakers of African languages (i.e. teachers in ex-DET classrooms), many Ll Afrikaans-speaking teachers in the Foundation Phase and upwards who have been compelled to teach through the medium of English should also be included. All subject advisers concerned with the ex-DET schools should be competent users of the relevant African language. Teachers feel strongly that unless existing English- and Afrikaans-speaking subject advisers are replaced by Xhosa-speaking (or Sotho-speaking, where relevant) counterparts, subject advisers will continue to have very little to offer the ex-DET schools.

Finally, it is crucial that schools, in conjunction with all relevant role-players and stakeholders, campaign for time off from work for ongoing INSET for teaching staff. The system of afternoon and weekend courses has some merit, but to e long run tens to overburden already stressed teachers. Neville Alexander (1998) has suggested that such INSET courses could be facilitated by a restructuring of initial training (pre-service) by which trainee teachers spend a far greater proportion of their time in schools, thereby relieving teachers. This would also serve the purpose of apprenticing trainee teachers into the practice of teaching more quickly and more effectively than at present.

12.3 At teacher education level[11]
The promotion of multilingualism in re-service and in-service courses is crucial to the enterprise of facilitating multilingual learning. NGOs could and should liaise with other role-players (e.g. via the In-service Providers' Coalition) in bringing pressure to bear on the provincial and national education authorities to restructure INSET and PRESET in accordance with the aims outlined above.

Also, a coherent new set of language requirements for teachers teaching in public schools needs to be developed following the scrapping of the requirements for teachers (E/e, A/a, X/x et c). Teacher education courses will need to be aligned with these. The goal should be to enable all teachers to teach competently through the medium of two languages.

In partnership with the relevant provincial education authorities, teacher in-service providers should be offering courses in which the intersection of multilingualism with Curriculum 2005 is systematically explored. Various key constituencies should be identified. Besides teachers and principals, these would include subject advisors and circuit managers. The provincial language

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[11]For additional recommendations, see Appendices.

managers envisaged by the national DE in its Implementation Plan for the new LiEP will require structured assistance from NGOs and other providers.

The development and distribution of appropriate learning support materials such as textbooks, stories, charts and posters, amongst other things, in the African language (or in two or more languages) remains an urgent undertaking. Some work has already been done at Foundation Phase level. This needs to be developed and extended to the greater demands of subject (or learning programme) specific teaching from the Intermediate Phase upwards. It would also be important to monitor the quality and relevance of the many materials that publishers are taking directly to the schools.

Finally, a national terminology databank for the African languages should be set up in partnership between 'national and provincial education departments, publishers and writers of learning support materials, academics and other stakeholders. The goal would be to collect and make available terms currently being coined by educators and other practitioners in the Nguni, Sotho, Venda and Tsonga languages in particular, for purposes of acquisition. It is crucial to complement corpus planning `from above' (e.g. via lexicography units) with spontaneous corpus planning `from below' in order to legitimise and extend the use of African Languages in high-status schooling domains such as 'content-subject' teaching and textbooks.

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