WHAT COUNTS AS LITERACY IN WINDHOEK URBAN PRE- AND PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN NAMIBIA?

BY

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DEDICATION

I wish to dedicate this thesis to my family, Tekla, Ngaitjitue, Veueza and Ngauje Hengari, for their continuous support and understanding that I constantly needed to be away from home in order to work on this project.

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DECLARATION

I, Hengari, Job Uazembua, hereby declare that the work on which the thesis is based is my original work, both in concept and execution (except where acknowledgements indicate otherwise) and that neither the whole work nor any part of it has been, is being, or is to be submitted for another degree at this or any other university.

I empower the university to for the purpose of research reproduce either the whole or any portion of the contents in any manner whatsoever.

Signature: Signed by candidate

Date: 01 March 2019

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ANC – African National Congress

ECD – Early Childhood Development

ETSIP – Education and Training Sector Improvement Program

IALS - International Adult Literacy Survey

IECD – Integrated Early Childhood Development

LMS – London Missionary Society

MEC – Ministry of Education and Culture

MOE – Ministry of Education

MGECW – Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare

MWACW - Ministry of Woman Affairs and Child Welfare

MOEC – Ministry of Education and Culture

NAMCOL – Namibia College of Open Learning

NECDC – National Early Childhood Development Committee

NGOs – Non-Governmental Organizations

NLS - New Literacy Studies

SACMEQ – Southern African Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality

SADAC – Southern African Development Community

UN – United Nations

UNGA – The United Nations General Assembly

VCF – Veterinary Cordon Fence

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to investigate what counts as literacy in Windhoek urban pre-and primary schools in Namibia. Using an ethnographic-style research paradigm the study examines literacy practices in social contexts to answer the question as to what counts as literacy in these schools. As teachers and learners and parents/caregivers and their children occupy the classroom/home as a social space, they engage each other in literacy events, during which literacy development is scaffolded and encouraged as a culturally valued activity. The study focused on three children and studied their early literacy development in their classrooms and at home by observing them and recording them during those practices. The data was collected in two phases, each stretching over a six months' period. The focus during phase one was on the preschool phase of early literacy learning, while phase two continued to collect the data at lower primary school phase. At pre- and primary school, the classroom is the place where teachers provide literacy practice and guidance to the learners. It is this 'school literacy' that defines what counts as literacy, a specific kind of literacy that is planned and offered to learners in a classroom setting. In Windhoek urban settings, the 'traditional' conception of literacy as a largely psychological ability – something true to do with our intellect, and thus a private possession – remains dominant. As some literacy is more dominant, visible and influential than others, the 'school-based literacy' in this study dominates and marginalizes the vernacular and techno-literacies that occur at home. I want to suggest that Namibia endorse the sociocultural approach to literacy learning by way of a paradigm shift in order to create room for other literacy practices outside of school, in homes and in communities, so as to become recognized and legitimized as they already are broadening what counts as literacy. I argue for a new curriculum that can account for similar variations in children's home backgrounds.

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1. CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

This in-depth study, which was a small-scale ethnographic-style inquiry, aims to enhance our understanding of how children begin to learn to read and write by answering the question: *What counts as literacy and how is it supported during pre-and primary school learning?* I was particularly interested in finding out how the literacy practices and events at home, at preschool and at primary school in Windhoek urban settings provide the resources or 'capital' necessary for literacy learning.

1.1 Background to the study

The history of Namibia passed through several distinct stages from being an uncolonized to a colonized country to becoming an independent country on 21 March 1990. Colonial rule was characterized by racial and ethnic divisions throughout Namibian society. During the apartheid era, the White minority groups that had the political power promoted and enforced a policy of separate development on the majority of the population. Different communities were thus segregated based on the color of their skin and the language they spoke. Language was used to legitimize the divisions in society and the inequalities of power and privilege. The policy afforded the White minority groups the opportunity to gain materially and to enrich themselves at the expense of the majority of the population. The small White settler population, backed by their colonial governments, controlled the economy and the political order. For the most part, education prepared people for the specific jobs that German and then South African rule required. During this era, the segregation of society ensured that the White elite remained superior in terms of education, jobs, authority, influence and incomes. As education was only available for the small elite, schools had to restrict and select their learners per language group, using stringent criteria for admission and promotion.

In the post-independence era, the pre-independence material gains of the White minority groups and those of the black middle class that emerged during the colonial era, both inside and outside the borders of Namibia, are safeguarded through the policy of national reconciliation and a lauded Namibian constitution, while the majority of urban and rural inhabitants live in poverty (Tapscott, 1993). On independence, education came to be considered a basic human right, to be

available to all people. Wikan et al., (2007, p. 5) point out that after independence, 11 centralized, separate education authorities were transformed into one integrated yet decentralized authority. The school curricula were re-written and the medium of instruction changed from mainly Afrikaans to English and a learner-centered approach of teaching was promoted, as opposed to the teacher-centered approach that had been common during the colonial era.

The Namibian school system now has 12 Grades which are divided into four phases: Pre-primary and Lower primary (Grades 0-4) using mother-tongue as medium of instruction only up to Grade 3 and thereafter English from Grade 4 onwards as medium of instruction; Upper primary (Grades 5-7); Junior secondary (Grades 8-10) and Senior secondary (Grades 11-12). Beyond schooling, at a tertiary level, vocational education and training and tertiary education and training institutions are responsible for training technical, academic and managerial personnel required for economic growth and development.

English Second Language is presented as a subject from Grade 1 through to Grade 12 for all learners in Namibia who do not have English as their home language. In addition, English is the medium of instruction from Grade 4 onwards. The purpose of English Second Language in Grades 1 to 3 is to prepare for the transition to English as the medium of instruction in Grade 4. Grade 4 is a transitional year in which the mother tongue plays a supportive role in teaching and learning. The intention behind introducing English as Second Language in Grade 4 is to provide a careful transition from teaching/learning in the home language to teaching/learning through the medium of English (Ministry of Education, 2005). In practice, Namibia has two contrasting language instructional routes in its primary schools. On the one hand we have transitional bilingualism (involving an early exit from the mother tongue) and on the other we have situations that provide for practice of the immersion approach (or “straight for English”). The language situation in Namibia provides a starting point to help us understand how literacy learning is constructed across different social settings in the Windhoek urban area in line with the language in education policy provisions (covered in Chapter 2).
Educational research in Namibia that I have reviewed focus on literacy in the narrow sense of teaching basic literacy ‘skills’ in English, e.g. Mbenzi, 1997; Sinalumbu, 2002; Kuutondokwa, 2003; Nepando, 2003; Veii, 2003; SACMEQ, 2004; Marope, 2005; Wikan et al., 2007. These

works focus on reading and writing within the non-social paradigm, as an autonomous conception with arrays of problems and challenges facing its learning being situated in the individuals and the socio-economic conditions notions. The Lower Primary Phase Curriculum (2005) refers to literacy, numeracy and broad knowledge of the immediate environment as the focus areas. 'Language' as a subject has listening and speaking, reading and writing as its three components. Thus, reference to reading and writing in school learning programs remains in force and the practice of teaching reading and writing as cognitive and behavioral processes still prevails. Therefore, to my knowledge, in Namibia there are no literacy studies in education grounded in an understanding of literacy as sociocultural practice. The pre-primary phase of formal basic education in Namibia, which is the point of entry of the current study, remains under-researched, yet it runs programs that are considered to have positive long-term benefits, including gains on future learning potential, educational attainment and adult productivity.

1.2 Statement of the problem

In an effort to answer the broader question as to why primary school children underachieve in reading and writing and mathematics in later grades, the present study investigates how pre- and primary school literacy learning is constructed across different social settings in the Windhoek urban area of Namibia. I have identified literacy as a social activity of a particular kind that takes place across home, community and in school contexts. Through the social interaction between the children and their caregivers, children take part in 'literacy learning' as an activity within their families, communities and schools. They engage with other children, parents, adults, and teachers in certain behaviors that would prepare them for later participation in related events and practices across these contexts. During this social activity, roles are offered to children, and in their process of participation, they become prepared for later engagement in related events as certain kinds of readers and writers. The home, communities and schools remains involved in the ongoing engagement that in the end transforms the children to become participants in related events as readers and writers in their communities.

The study focuses on three cases, one each from a geographically different social setting, namely Katutura, Khomasdal and Windhoek town, representing respectively the working class, middle class and upper class. I was particularly interested in an in-depth study to enhance our

understanding of how children begin to learn to read and write by answering the question: *What counts as literacy and how is it supported during pre-and primary school learning?* The study therefore intends to find out how the literacy practices and events at home, at preschool and at primary school provide the necessary resources or 'capital' necessary for literacy learning.

1.3 Research Objectives

The present study aims to enhance our understanding of how children develop as readers and writers in the Namibian context. By studying children's emerging language and literacy as a social practice, it tackles literacy as embedded in the socio-cultural contexts of home, school and community. The study further takes an ecological paradigmatic approach by examining literacy as a set of situated social practices associated with particular symbol systems and their related technologies, rather than as separate psychological skills or abilities with universal applicability across different socio-cultural contexts. By extending literacy research to go beyond the school-based literacy activities it is hoped that new answers will be found as to why some learners in Namibia lower primary schools are experiencing problems learning to read and write, and best practices in literacy instruction are suggested. This research aimed to:

- Collect evidence of home, pre- and primary school literacy practices and events as orientations to language and literacy learning;

- Respond to: *What counts as literacy and how it is supported during pre-and primary school learning?* by examining the relations among home, pre- and primary school literacy practices of three children from different backgrounds.

I set out to investigate the early literacy learning of young children from different backgrounds and sought to analyze if there were differences and/or similarities between home, pre- and primary school literacy practices and events in which three children participated. From this process I hoped to derive some understanding of how literacy is constructed and supported in these various social settings and to make sense of contrasts and comparisons across contexts that might emerge.

1.4 Research Question

As already described, the focus question that the research set out to answer is the following:

What counts as literacy and how is literacy learning supported during its early learning in pre- and primary school and at home in Namibia?

In answering this question, the study draws on ethnography as a methodological tool to view literacy development as a social practice rather than as a set of technical and neutral skills and to situate it in a framework of understanding that links literacy theory to broader debates in social theory.

1.5 Significance and purpose of the study

The significance of this study is multiple. It extends research in the area of early literacy development in Namibia. The study reveals what can be learnt from a case study of the literacy practices that particular children in Namibia participate in and how such practices support them to become readers and writers. Secondly, the study examines literacy learning taking place at both pre- and at primary schools, which form the foundation phase for reading and writing, in order to explain how it is possible that a significant number of children start to experience problems in learning to read and write. The study considers whether what happens during this time might have a significant influence on children's progress in literacy achievement across later grade levels. Thirdly, the study provides useful information on the current early childhood contexts and conditions as well as programs and what teachers do in the classroom to promote literacy learning. Fourthly, the study offers an alternative approach to the study of literacy in Namibia as it used an ethnographic-style research method to seek an understanding of what counts as literacy and how that was supported during its learning as a social practice. Finally, contrary to the traditional view of literacy, I want to advance the view that literacy and its study should be framed in terms of the sociocultural approach by way of a paradigm shift in order to develop a new definition of literacy in the Namibian context, and to allow such a definition to continue to evolve and thereby (a) contribute to enhanced teaching and learning of literacy in schools, (b) allow teachers to explore ways of implementing literacy learning in its new broader

definition in their classroom practice, and (c) to facilitate the identification of 'sensible lines of inquiry' into this paradigm.

1.6 Conceptual background

Through the literature search it became clear that the concept "literacy" has evolved out of 'contestation, innovation and reconceptualization and one that has become and continues to be susceptible to the scrutiny of a wide range of theoretical and methodological positions'. It is not a concept that has finished evolving, nor will it ever do so. As a position it recognizes that it is "a social construct" and as such will "never achieve fixity" (Hall, Larson, & Marsh, 2003, p. 10). I chose to study literacy within education as a sociocultural practice in opposition to the 'traditional' conception of literacy as a largely psychological ability: Literacy teaching and learning in Namibia is being thought of in terms of reading and writing as neutral variables and thus as a largely psychological ability, something true to do with our intellect, and thus a private possession (Lankshear, 1999). Following is a brief presentation of two theoretical positions, the autonomous and the ideological models of literacy, from which the present study had to select one.

The autonomous model of literacy

The autonomous model of literacy is conceptualized in technical terms, treating it as independent of social context, an autonomous variable whose consequences for society and cognition can be derived from its intrinsic character (Street, 1993, 2005). According to this model, literacy is construed as existing independently of specific contexts of social practice; having autonomy from material enactments of language in such practices; and producing effects independently of contextual social factors. It is seen as a neutral variable, independent of and impartial toward trends and struggles in everyday life (Lankshear, 1999). Being literate under the autonomous model has meant "mastering decoding and encoding skills, entailing cognitive capacities involved in 'cracking the alphabetic code', word formation, phonics, grammar, comprehension etc. Encoding and decoding skills serve as building blocks for doing other things and for accessing meanings … once people are literate they can use 'it' (the skill repertoire, the ability) in all sorts of ways as a means to pursuing diverse benefits (employment, knowledge, recreational pleasure, personal development, economic growth, innovation etc.)" (Lankshear,

1999, p. 208). Clifford (1984) points out that being literate enables the individual to function independently in his society and with a potential for movement in that society to hold a decent job to support self and family and to lead a life of dignity and pride. Survival quality in this functional definition "equate(s) reading, writing, and work" (Clifford, 1984, p. 478).
Searle (1999) argues that literacy as autonomous model is also a tool or technology which is essential to gain access to new knowledge. Education is seen as an assembly line producing human skills and capacities (human capital discourse). As a result, educational outcomes can be stated and individual performance can be assessed in relation to the objectives. The emphasis is on the delivery of key skills and the curriculum spells out what is to be taught, the manner in which it is taught. What gets tested and how such components are to be tested. Sequenced mastery of skills forms the basis of reading/writing and instruction focuses on the formal aspects of reading/writing and generally ignores their functional uses (Teale & Sulzby, 1986). In such a traditional approach, the teacher has to deliver the curriculum as prescribed and drill its content to the learners in preparation for the promotional tests and examinations. Pahl and Rowsell (2006, p. 236) point out that in such classes,

> The students remain seated in desks, focused on either a board or on a teacher doing most of the talking and serving a diet of preset tasks which ask them to feedback as individuals information transmitted to them as a group.

The autonomous view of literacy in practice simply imposes western conceptions of literacy onto other cultures that have other conceptions of literacy (Prinsloo et al., 1996). Other literacies such as drawings, letter-writing, games, photography, visual format, digital materials, keeping a diary, music, computer, play and drama, folklores, vernacular literacies, cultural resources, workers' literacies, local and social literacies all have their relevance and are significant to those using them. Clifford (1984, p. 481) argues that 'one needs not to stop with words: symbols, circuit diagrams, graphs, pictures, clouds, faces, body language, maps, music are all waiting to be read'. These other forms of literacies are present and young children learn about them as they are used around them, even if schools may not recognize them. It is through recognizing and upholding the western concepts of literacy that other forms of literacies are ill-considered. Prinsloo et al., (1996) argue that the rich, elaborate and varied meanings and uses of literacy in different cultures

across time and space become marginalized and are treated as failed attempts to access the dominant, standard form represented by western-type schooling. Thus "school literacy" tends to define what counts as literacy, and this constructs the lack of 'school literacy' in deficit terms – those who don't have it are seen as being defective at the cognitive level and suffer from the stigma of illiteracy (Prinsloo et al., 1996, p. 19). This obscures the presence of literacy in other forms, and perpetuates the notion of literacy as individual performance only. Prinsloo et al., caution that such multiple literacies imply that they are seen as equal in their respective cultures, but that different literacies are in use, even if they do not carry the same "cultural capital" (Bourdieu, 1991). Grabe and Kaplan (1996, p. 14) see the central issue in literacy development not as the development of uniform cognitive skills, but as the recognition that there are many different literacy practices, of which only a few are likely to be valued by a given educational system.

The intent in this study is not to continue at length with the traditional view of literacy that treats it as an asocial cognitive skill which has little or nothing to do with human relationships (Gee, 2008) but rather with the sociocultural view which has begun to approach literacy not as a singular thing but as a plural set of social practices: literacies. I want to take a stance against the autonomous model of literacy by advocating what has become known as a sociocultural, socio-literacy, and the new literacy studies paradigm. I want to answer the question: 'What counts as literacy?' in terms of a sociocultural perspective. Following is an explanation of the arguments advanced by proponents of sociocultural conceptions of literacy as my preferred theoretical approach.

The ideological model of literacy

A large body of work from linguists, sociologists and anthropologists has begun to replace the autonomous model of literacy from early childhood reading to adult literacy programs as the ability to read and write based on over-simplistic psychological models by providing a "language of description" (Pahl & Rowsell, 2006) and "explanatory power" (Lankshear, 1999) for analyzing literacy as a social practice in its social environments. Critique from a range of disciplinary vantage points and in a range of ways as found in the work of Heath (1982, 1986), Street (1993, 2003, 2005), Barton (1994, 2001, and 2007), Barton et al., (2000), Gee (2001,

2008), Scribner and Cole (1981), Prinsloo and Breier (1996), Green (1988), Rogoff (1990, 1995), Lankshear (1999), Smagorinsky (2018), and Prinsloo and Stein (2004), among many others, oppose the psychological approaches to literacy learning that remained too confined to the classroom and its pedagogy.

Street proposes, in opposition to the "autonomous model" of literacy, an "ideological model". The latter model views literacy as inextricably linked to cultural and power structures in society, and recognizes the variety of cultural practices associated with reading and writing in different contexts. Street uses the term 'ideological' rather than less contentious or loaded terms such as "cultural", "sociological", or "pragmatic" because it signals quite explicitly that literacy practices are aspects not only of "culture" but also of power structures. Street (1993, p. 9) points out that in order to avoid the reification of the autonomous model, the researchers study these social practices rather than literacy-in-itself for their relationship to other aspects of social life. He further points out that,

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

The ideological model rejects the notion of an essential literacy lying behind actual social practices involving texts. What literacy is, consists in the forms textual engagement takes within specific material contexts of human practice. These forms, which Street calls 'conceptions and practices of literacy in specific cultural contexts' (Street, 1993, p. 2) evolve and are enacted in contexts involving particular relations and structures of power, values, beliefs, goals and purposes, interests, economic and political conditions, and so on. Hence, Street (1993, p. 7) and Lankshear (1999, p. 205) point out that the consequences of literacy "flow not from literacy-in-itself, but from the conjoint operations of the text-related components and all the other factors integral to the practices in question". The various forms of practices of reading and writing, imaging, computers, visual media and others, play out as components of larger practices, reflecting and promoting particular values, beliefs, social relations, patterns of interests,

concentrations of power, and so on. Hence, literacy cannot be seen as 'neutral' or as a producer of effects in 'its own right' (Lankshear, 1999, p. 205).

Reasons for suggesting a shift to the ideological model

The roots of literacy (Goodman, 1986) occur in individuals as they explore cultural tools (e.g. reading/writing) with the assistance of other companions in their communities. Barton (2007), for example, points out that children learn the particular language and literacy practices of their community. Children from mainstream homes and those from minority communities, even those from homes without print literacy, have different ways of making meaning that resonates from the particular literacy practices that they are involved in in their community. The big question is: Are children at home being prepared for the schools' ways of knowing and are home practices being acknowledged in schools even if there is a mismatch between home and school practices? There is thus a need to consider the language and literacy practices that children come to school with, even when they are not the versions the school uses. Since home is a primary socializing setting for young children, the reading and writing which occur in this setting would provide insight into the orientations to literacy with which the children come to start school (Teale, 1986; Barnitz, 1994; Duke & Purcell-Gates, 2003). The one-size-fits-all reading/writing program which schools offer indiscriminately, without building on community literacy practices, begins the production of reading/writing failures by allowing some children to build inefficient systems of functioning, which keep them crippled in this process throughout their school carriers (Clay, 1972). Gee (1998) and Heath (1983) show that the acquisition of Reading and Writing is enhanced when instruction builds on students' earlier Speaking, Reading, and Writing experiences. Gee and Heath have shown that schools often miss these earlier experiences when they are not versions of Speaking, Reading, and Writing that 'fit' or 'resonate' with early school-based forms.

Lankshear (1999, p. 205) argues that the myriad literacies that play out in social life should be seen as integral components of larger practices, simultaneously reflecting and promoting particular values, beliefs, social relations, patterns of interests, concentrations of power, and the like. In no way, then, can literacy be seen as 'neutral' or as a producer of effects in 'its own right'. Lankshear (1999, p. 210) points out that "understanding literacy as sociocultural practice

means that reading and writing can only be understood in the context of the social, cultural, political, economic, historical practices to which they are integral; of which they are a part". Lankshear further points out that there is no practice without meaning, just as there is no meaning outside of practice. Within contexts of human practice, language (words, literacy, texts) gives meaning to contexts and, dialectically, contexts give meaning to language. Consequently, there is no reading or writing in any meaningful sense of the terms outside of social practices, or discourses.

Reasons for selecting a sociocultural approach to this study

The goal of a sociocultural approach is to 'explicate the relationships between human mental functioning, on the one hand, and the cultural, institutional, and historical situations in which this functioning occurs, on the other' (Wertsch, Del Rio, & Alvarez, 1995, p. 3). For the purposes of this study the sociocultural model was selected, primarily because it has developed methods and concepts for explaining literacy in all its social varieties.

As an example of the above claim, the whole question of the cognitive effects of literacy (defined as the 'ability to read and write') was redefined by the ground-breaking work on the Vai in Liberia by Scribner and Cole (1981) that led to the shift from a behaviorist psychological paradigm to a socio-psychological paradigm. By studying the social context of each Vai subgroup, the school people, Vai script literates, and the non-literates, they found three different literacies operating among these people, each with a particular context of use. They advise a practice account of literacy, pointing out that 'literacy is not simply knowing how to read and write a particular script but applying this knowledge for specific purposes in specific contexts of use' (Scribner & Cole, 1981, p. 236). Their study also refutes the claim that 'deep psychological differences' divide literate and non-literate populations. On no task – logic, abstraction, memory, and communication – did they find all non-literates performing at lower levels than all literates.

In examining reading and writing in an institution such as school, Barton (2007) identifies six 'genres of language use' which are common patterns of language use in schools, namely, labelling, storytelling, meaning quests, eventcasts, accounts and recounts. Such genres are differentially available within social practices (discourses) of different social groups. Children

from upper-, middle and working class homes all come to school knowing their specific communities' ways of making meaning. Barton points out that children who do not know mainstream ways of making meaning still know other ways their cultures make meaning, which need to also enter school in order to reduce the mismatch between home and school practices. Heath (1982) studied two working class communities – one African-American, the other White – in Piedmont Carolinas, along with a smaller study of middle-class townspeople in the USA to find out how literacy was embedded in their cultural contexts. She shows that both mainstream as well as White working-class children (though not African-American children) performed comparably well in the initial stages of each of the three early grades, but the White working-class children of Roadville community started to fall behind about the time they entered the fourth grade. The frequency of questions and reading habits they were familiar with from their language socialization background started to decline in the higher grades, causing them to lag behind their peers from the middle-class 'mainstream'. The African-American children of Trackton community, in contrast, grew up with substantial verbal, creative skills but these did not translate at all well to the cue-response discourse patterns of schooling and these children on the whole did not do well at school. Heath points out that there is a need for ethnographic research to provide descriptions of the ways different social groups 'take' knowledge from their environment in order for the school to know the genres of language-use that their learners come to school with and not to close an eye to the genres of language-use which their cultures could not provide, but to work out modalities to bridge such gaps.

Some children come to school already knowing how to read and write because they have been engaged as newcomers or apprentices, with help from adults and more advanced peers, in specific social practices or activities of Reading and Writing that take place at school (Gee, 1998). Gee points out that it is also the case that some children come to school having engaged in varieties of reading, writing, or speaking that do not 'fit' or 'resonate with' the school. The school usually misses this fact and sees only absence of experience. Other children come to school having had little exposure or no exposure or early initiation into reading and writing, and therefore cannot make good progress but fall behind their peers, often getting labelled as having learning difficulties. Gee (1998, p. 10) cautions that 'teachers should not let their students so routinize design that they are simply "colonized" by the social practice they are acquiring and

cannot transform and innovate design features for their own personal, social, and political purpose'.

In an ethnographic study of early childhood literacy, Dyson (1993, p. 4) defines literacy as a 'social action by which children use print to represent their ideas and to interact with other people'. She points out that children from diverse backgrounds for whom literacy was not emphasized at home bring diverse experiences to symbol-producing – talking, drawing, playing, storytelling, and for some, some kind of experience with print, all of which are resources with which both teachers and children can build new possibilities in literacy learning.

In his study of the emergent literacy practices of children in their out-of-school peer in *play* Khayelitsha, Cape Town, Prinsloo (2004) urges teachers to allow children to draw on their resources and experiences outside school, and to use other media besides talk and print, including drawings and dramatic play, as they learn how the written media works, and what social possibilities it allows, for example, for fulfilling the requirements of the official curriculum, for representing their imagined worlds, and for connecting with friends as well as with family. He urges that the classroom should become a space for an 'expanded activity', where hybridity and diversity are viewed as important cultural resources in children's development, where the activity system is extended and the activity itself reorganized, resulting in new opportunities for learning.

Finally, I draw on Kress's theoretical approach to argue that children are creative users not only of print and spoken language, but also of visual formats, including oral and digital materials. The broader question I ask in the context of Kress's work is whether the literacies being taught at schools are relevant to the lives that learners are leading and will have to lead in this globalized world that demands flexibility, multimodality and multi-literacies. This study draws on this approach to find out, to borrow Kress's phrase, 'what is to hand' at school and at home (Kress, 1997).

Secondly, a sociocultural approach offers fruitful ways of understanding and addressing 'what is going on here' that cannot be obtained from the traditional approach to literacy that focuses on

enhancing or remediation of the design features of literacy. Lankshear (1999, p. 212) for example points out that "many students may fail to grasp the point of school literacies on account of the gulf that often exists between school practices and the "real life" or "mature versions of social practices" learners experience in their larger lives". He further points out that these 'real world' practices are typically a long way removed from 'essayism' and the 'initiation-response-evaluation' routines so prevalent in school discourse.

Thirdly, the sociocultural perspectives on literacy and learning provide powerful bases for pedagogical interventions aimed at 'high quality' learning. Learning can be in the forms of apprenticeship, peer learning, authentic tasks, skill-focused practices, completed public projects, performances, displays and exhibitions.

Fourthly, this approach provides a more morally acceptable and human foundation on which to base educational practice and social reform than do theories, concepts, values, and practices coalescing around the traditional view of literacy. For example, socio-literacy studies see the traditional view as going hand in glove with quantitative approaches and world views like psychometrics, measurable levels of academic (dis)ability and (il)literacy, quantifications of 'functionality' etc. These lend themselves to constructing learners who experience difficulties with school literacy as "deficit systems" (e.g. as having inadequate or inappropriate home support for school learning; not enough books or the right kind of books in the home) or in many cases, as "learning disabled", "academically challenged", "slow learners", "ADD" etc. Such theories and constructs support the creation of particular kinds of 'social worlds'. Policies and practices emphasizing diagnostic assessment, remedial assistance programs, regular reporting against "profiles", 'standards' or "benchmarks", packages of special learning-teaching techniques and the like are 'natural' concomitants of the traditional view (Lankshear, 1999, p. 213).

A sociocultural definition of literacy

In providing a sociocultural definition of literacy, I draw on Gee (2008) who made sense of reading, writing and meaning-making as integral elements of social practices. He defined literacy in relation to Discourses. Primary Discourse is an initial Discourse which is grounded in our

primary/first oral language, which is acquired by nearly all human beings (except under extraordinary conditions) within their family or primary socializing unit through the process of enculturation. Early in life, we all learn a culturally distinctive way of being an 'everyday person' – that is, a non-specialized, non-professional person. The primary Discourse gives us our initial and often enduring sense of self and sets the foundations of our culturally specific vernacular language, the language in which we speak and act as 'everyday' (non-specialized) people, and our culturally specific vernacular identity. As a person grows, his/her primary Discourse can change, hybridize with other Discourses, and they can even die. All the Discourses we acquire later in life, beyond our family or primary socializing unit, in association with and by having access to and practice with secondary institutions such as schools, churches, workplaces, clubs, bureaucracies and professional associations are called secondary Discourses. Gee defines being literate as having control of secondary language uses, that is, fluent mastery of language used within secondary Discourses. Secondary uses of language include reading and writing of different genres (e.g. classroom talk, completing forms, interviewing, writing letters, running stock inventories, writing policy, translating), and computer skills of various types (e.g. inputting data), as examples (Gee, 2008; see also Lankshear et al., 1997). According to Gee, being literate is not a singular competency or attribute; there are 'as many applications of the term 'literacy' as there are secondary Discourses (see also Grabe & Kaplan, 1996). Literacy is now measured in terms of how well an individual controls secondary uses of language in the domains outside the home and local neighborhood (see also Mutasa, 2006). Gee further points out those social groups that are deeply affiliated with formal schooling often incorporate into the socialization of their children practices that resonate with later school-based secondary Discourses. For example, from an early age their children are encouraged and coached at dinner time to tell stories in quite expository ways that are rather like little essays, or parents interact with their children over books in ways that encourage a great deal of labelling and answering of a variety of different types of questions, as well as forming of intertextual relationships between books and between books and the world (Gee, 2008).

This sociocultural definition and concept of literacy has offered these new perspectives to education:

(a) it recognizes that there are myriad literacies;

(b) it takes the emphasis off 'print competence' which must now be extended to include visual language of film and television, photography, commercial and political advertising and other digital materials as well;
(c) it denounces the misguided notion of "literacy" being "foundational" or "linked in a linear way" to larger practices, i.e. it is not as if we "learn the print stuff" and can then go on and "use it" in straightforward "applications" to "forms of life";
(d) it puts the emphasis within education in the right places, insisting that literacies be acquired "whole"; it provides a basis for questioning the narrow and peculiar privileging of characteristic "School Discourse(s)";
(e) it points out that many primary Discourses are far removed from School Discourse(s); it helps explain that coming to acquire secondary discursive competence that proves so difficult for some learners comes by way of immersed acquisition rather than through instructed learning; and
(f) it focuses our attention on the injustices inherent in the processes whereby schooling privileges certain literacies over others, thereby disadvantaging those whose primary and other secondary Discourses 'do not fit' more closely with the cultural selections of school and the wider social order (Lankshear, 1999, pp. 216-217).

The current study, in answering the question: 'What counts as literacy and how is it supported during its early learning?' will examine literacy events and practices at homes, pre- and early primary schools in a Windhoek urban setting in Namibia. The term *events* used here pertains to observable social activities in which a piece of writing is central to the nature of the participants' interaction, resulting in interpretation and meaning creation from the text, and as any occasion in which a piece of writing is shared and interpreted and guides the interactions of the participants. Literacy *practices,* on the other hand, refer to the uses of written language that people in a given culture draw upon in a literacy event, how it is understood and valued. Literacy is a socially motivated phenomenon in this approach; its purposes, uses, and values are determined by the society in which such literacy skills are practiced (Barton, 1994, 2001, 2007; Cairney, 2003; Gee, 2008; Heath, 1982; Goodman, 1986; Dyson, 1993; Maybin, 2007; Reder & Davila, 2005; Volk & De Acosta, 2001; Street, 1984; Prinsloo & Baynham, 2008).

Dimensions of literacy

Literacy learning, especially in the context of school learning, comprises three significantly interrelated dimensions that need to be considered to understand literacy in its fullest sense: the operational, the cultural and the critical (Green, 1988; see also Lankshear, 1999; Lankshear et al., 2006). Green explains the *operational dimension* as referring to 'the means of literacy' in the sense that it is in and through the medium of language that literacy events happen. It involves competency with regard to the language system. That is, can the individuals read and write appropriately and adequately in a range of contexts? (Green, 1988, p. 160).

The *cultural dimension* refers to the 'meaning aspect of literacy and it involves competency with regard to the meaning system' (Green, 1988, p. 160). Literacy acts and events have multiple dimensions; they are 'context' specific but also entail a specific 'content'. One is never literate in and of itself but in something, in some aspect of knowledge or experience. Green points out that someone does not have to be and cannot be literate with regard to everything, nor is he/she powerless in circumstances outside their immediate competence as they know what to do and who to see in order to achieve their purposes. The cultural aspect of literacy refers to being socialized to become an effective, functioning participant in the culture through learning the language and becoming competent with regard to using it as a resource for meaning. Thus, cultural learning and language learning are reciprocal and mutually enriching. Green points out that language (and literacy) learning (competencies in reading and writing) is the province of the junior primary school, while cultural learning is done in terms of subject-area learning after the former has been learned.

The *critical dimension* of literacy has to do with the 'social construction of knowledge' and the notion of schooling as socialization. The cultural learning and subject-specific learning involves 'socialization into the dominant culture' (Green, 1988, p. 162). Thus, in the absence of a critical dimension, subject-specific literacy can operate as a 'means of social control'. It is the critical dimension that enables the individual not simply to participate in the culture but also, in various ways, to transform and actively produce it. Green (1988, p. 163) further points out that 'a socially critical stance on subject-specific literacy means providing individuals, at any level of

schooling, with the means to reflect critically on what is being learned and taught in the classrooms and to take an active role in the production of knowledge and meaning'.

Critical literacy involves the development of 'analytic habits of thinking, reading, writing, speaking, or discussing which go beneath surface impressions, traditional myths, mere opinions, and routine clinches; understanding the social contexts and consequences of any subject-matter; discovering the deep meaning of any event, text, technique, process, object, statement, image, or situation; applying that meaning to your own context' (Lankshear et al., 1997, p. 61).

The 'critical dimension' involves three related levels of activity, which are: (a) developing a critical perspective on literacy per se; (b) engaging in critique of particular texts or specific stances of literacy in use; and (c) making 'critical readings' of Discourses and enacting forms of resistance or transformative practice on the basis of preferred ethical, political and educational values/ideals. This seeks to explain and critique the operation of school literacies as interest-serving selections from a larger culture, which systematically advantage some groups and language communities over others (Lankshear, 1999, p. 221).

Literacy pedagogy within 'the social turn'

When analyzing the data, Rogoff's (1990, 1995) cultural apprenticeship model of learning was used, a sociocultural approach that involves observation of sociocultural activity such as literacy development. Rogoff (1995) advances three planes of analysis for interpreting and evaluating learning. These are: apprenticeship, guided participation, and participatory appropriation. They correspond with community/institutional, interpersonal, and personal processes. Rogoff points out that these plains are mutually constituting, interdependent, inseparable but distinguishable and identifying them individually enables particular aspects of a learning process to become the focus of analysis at different times, but with the others necessarily remaining in the background of the analysis. Following is a brief explanation of Rogoff's three planes of focus in sociocultural activity.

According to Rogoff, 'apprenticeship' operates within a plane of community and institutional activity and involves "active individuals participating with others in culturally organized activity

that has as part of its purpose the development of mature participation in the activity by the less experienced people" (Rogoff, 1995, p. 142). In a schooling context, newcomers (children/learners/pupils) who are less experienced in a particular kind of social activity (e.g. reading and writing) are assisted by becoming involved to develop mature participation in this social activity (the use of literacy) by advancing their skills and understanding through participation with others in literacy learning. At school, the teachers (experts, but who remain lifelong learners who refine their expertise in the process of engaging in activities with others of varying experience) and the learners engage in culturally organized activity (literacy learning) as apprenticeship.

'Guided participation' entails "processes and systems of involvement between people as they communicate and coordinate efforts while participating in culturally values activity" (Rogoff, 1995, p. 142). These include looking at all interpersonal interactions and arrangements such as face-to-face interaction and side-by-side joint participation, as well as observation and hands-on involvement in cultural activities.

'Participatory appropriation' refers to the process of "engagement and participation" in an ongoing event or activity, making ongoing contributions in concrete actions or in understanding the actions and ideas of others and through that, change and become prepared to engage in subsequent similar events or activities (Rogoff, 1995, p. 150). Rogoff sees children's active participation itself as being the process by which they gain facility in an activity.

The apprenticeship model of pedagogy in opposition to the traditional view grounds literacy learning within settings with the basic unit of analysis being that of an event. The traditional view separates the person and the social context, by studying the individual's possession or acquisition or lack of skills in a rather decontextualized manner. The apprenticeship model has proven effective for mastering operational and cultural dimensions of literacy as it recruits learners to Discourses 'from the inside' (Lankshear, 1999, p. 220). I combined this model with work within the socio-literacy studies to add the critical dimension to what is being learned and taught in classrooms. Following is a discussion of the critical dimension of literacy which,

together with the operational and the cultural, form a three-dimensional view of effective literacy (Lankshear, 1999).

1.7 Chapter layout

The first Chapter provided an introduction; the research focus was outlined and the rationale for the study explained. The chapter reviewed approaches to literacy learning and challenged the traditional conception of literacy as a largely psychological ability – something involving our intellect and essential to functioning in society. I took a stance against the autonomous model of literacy by expressing support for what has become known as a sociocultural, socio-literacy, and the new literacy studies paradigm.

In Chapter 2, I provide the historical, political and social background to the study. It covers the land occupation, early childhood education and general education provisions up to the end of colonialism so as to infer literacy from the availability of education, and tackles the challenges that Namibia was faced with after independence. The Namibian languages are then described and, if the prevailing sources of communication are available, semiotic resources that gained acceptance in the mainstream of educational practice. This background is necessary to understand why schools miss most of their learners' earlier speaking, reading, and writing experiences as they are not the versions on offer by the early school-based forms.

Chapter 3 familiarizes the reader with the methodology employed in the study. I used an ethnographic-style paradigm in order to understand what counts as literacy and how literacy learning is supported at pre- and primary school and at home in Namibia. The research process is outlined in detail and a brief individual profile is presented of each participating child for both pre- and primary school phases.
The analytical part of the thesis starts in Chapter 4, which covers literacy practices in preschools and in home settings while Chapter 5 covers literacy practices in primary schools and in home settings. The telling cases that I draw on regarding what is happening in terms of literacy teaching and learning in classrooms and at home at both pre- and primary school phases reveal that literacy learning in Windhoek urban settings over-relies on the traditional view of literacy as reading and writing, as a largely psychological ability that has to do with our intellect.

In conclusion, Chapter 6 presents the conclusion and summary of the study's findings. I argue that a sociocultural conception of literacy will have much to offer education in the context of Windhoek urban settings in particular and Namibia in general. The sociocultural approach provides a more humane, democratic and morally fair theoretical basis on which to base Namibia's educational practice. The thesis ends with thoughts on what needs to be done if Namibia is to consider a paradigm shift from a highly autonomous approach to literacy learning, to a more ideological view of literacy learning.

1.8 Conclusion

In this chapter I pointed out that the present study investigated how pre- and primary school literacy learning is constructed across different social settings in the Windhoek urban area of Namibia. It outlined the historical overview with references to a move from being a colonized country to independence. I pointed out that the segregation and inferior education that went along with the apartheid rule have endured in the independent era to such an extent that the unequal provision of education and unfair language choices have continued. The chapter presented two theoretical positions, the autonomous and the ideological models of literacy, and highlighted the sociocultural conceptions of literacy as the theoretical approach guiding this study.

In the following chapter, I present the historical and political background of the study as a way to developing a socio-historical perspective on the subject of literacy.

2. CHAPTER TWO: HISTORICAL, SOCIAL AND POLITICAL CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

The socio-historical investigation this chapter undertakes begins to address the question as to what counts as literacy in early childhood in Namibia by way of developing a socio-historical perspective on the question. The subject of literacy remained embedded in the social, political and economic realities that Namibia went through over time. Literacy has remained part of the Namibian populace since pre-colonial era. The enculturation of the younger generation into the ways of life of their particular culture happened through education. This education that was availed to the younger generation as part of their culture enabled them to become literate and live out their cultural life with other members of their cultural group. Different cultural groups therefore had many kinds of literacy which collectively impacted on their lives, with land providing their means of livelihood. I therefore considered land occupation as central, an anchor for people, in pointing out how they occupied it to derive their livelihood from it. I present what counted as literacy during the pre-colonial phase by reflecting on what was taught, where and by whom among the indigenous people of Namibia, to show what literacy encompassed. During this period, literacy was not taught in separate institutions but was acquired in many different settings, such as homes and informal groups in communities.

This phase will be followed by what came to count as literacy after western societies colonized the country, by pointing out their intent with land and the dynamic role of religion in the spread of literacy and the introduction of schooling as a tool of power and control, social stratification, inequality and oppression. By presenting the local historical realities of education and literacy in the Namibian context, this study shows that certain forms of education and literacy were the means by which a social group extended its historical tenure of status and privilege by denying it to others who were not assimilated into the forms of culture approved by the social and political elites. Houston (1983) points out that literacy in the context of colonialism is inferred from the availability of established formal educational institutions of learning with the most significant guide to levels of literacy being the existence or nonexistence of schools. Since literacy was used as a means of control during the colonial era, its availability to the indigenous people in such schools remained restricted and mediocre. As pointed out by Street, introducing literacy to the poor, ‘illiterate’ people suggests a movement from non-literate to literate, towards civilization by

enhancing their cognitive skills, improving their economic prospects, making them better citizens regardless of the social and economic conditions that accounted for their 'illiteracy' in the first place (Street, 2003, p. 77). This unidimensional progress towards 'civilization' or economic 'take-off' works from the assumption that literacy in itself – autonomously – will have effects on other social and cognitive practices, thus representing what Street has called the 'autonomous' model of literacy (Street, 1993, p. 5).

This historical review is divided into four categories: Pre-colonial education; Missionary education; German colonial education; and South African colonial education in Namibia. The discussion under each of the categories is divided into four brief sections, covering a brief account of how land came to be occupied in each case; early childhood education provision; general education provision; and concluding remarks that lead into the following section of the historical review.

2.1 Pre-colonial education

2.1.1 Land occupation

Katjavivi (1988, pp. 1-2) explains that before colonialism, Namibia was inhabited by several distinct communities: the Herero who were nomadic pastoralists and subsisted mainly on the milk and meat of cattle, goat and sheep, and the Damara people who were hunter-gatherers, semi-nomadic gardeners and pastoralists and who lived in the central and north-western parts of the territory, while in the north were the Ovambo communities who raised cattle, fish in oshanas and agriculture. An 'oshana' is a wide, shallow river-bed, like a plain, having water only in the rainy season (Tirronen, 1986, p. 369). Various Nama clans settled in Southern Namibia as pastoralists and hunter-gatherers, and the Orlams migrated from the Cape during the early nineteenth century and were hunters and farmers. The Rehoboth Basters who were originally from the Cape, established a community south of Windhoek in 1870. In Okavango there were the Kwangwali, Mbunza, Shambyu, Mbukushu and Gciriku. Their livelihood was based on fishery, keeping livestock and crop production. In the Caprivi region in the north-east of Namibia, the Subia, Yei and Lozi lived alongside the Mbukushu people and they all lived on fishing, cattle farming and vegetable gardening. The earliest identified inhabitants were the nomadic hunter-gatherer San or Bushmen who lived along the Kalahari Desert and in north-central areas. The life

of each group or clan revolved around the land and its use. Each of these groups constituted their own societies with different cultural practices and areas of settlement (Katjavivi, 1988, pp. 1-2).

2.1.2 Early childhood education

Although Katjavivi (1988), Salia-Bao (1991), Amukugo (1993), Cohen (1994), Storeng (1994) and Katzao (1999) extensively describe education provision in Namibia, they do not capture details about any aspects of early childhood development that might have taken place during the pre-colonial period. Perhaps such a concern was not on their agenda, or they did not find any primary research literature on this topic. However, my personal experience is that people welcome, raise and love their offspring; and that this happens in culturally distinctive ways across social groupings. Haihambo, Mushaandja and Hengari (2006, p. 8) point out that many Namibian tribes still have ceremonies to celebrate the birth of a child. These ceremonies and rituals include, among others, the nurturing of the expectant mother, naming ceremonies (accompanied by presentations of traditional beads and baby carriers and other cultural artifacts), as well as child initiation and other cultural rituals. In the past, the extended family played a very significant role in child upbringing. Infants stayed with their parents, who often lived within an extended family setting, in which child care was shared communally. Grandparents perceived it as their role and their right to raise their grandchildren. Even where grandparents lived elsewhere, it was normal practice for some parents to send their children to the grandparents once they were weaned. As Haihambo et al. (2006, p. 80) describe it; the grandparents used products from their farming to raise infants with care and pride. Often, child-care activities in these settings focused on the provision of basic physiological and psychosocial needs such as loving the children and imparting cultural values. Depending on their socio-cultural and economic practices, people had to rely on their habitat and their productive activities for survival, such as hunting, gathering and other harvesting activities such as fishing. Their children participated in the everyday activities of their communities, carrying out age-appropriate family chores and responsibilities.

2.1.3 General education

Namibia was therefore a ‘complex place’ before colonialism and a stable entity called ‘indigenous education’ that would be the same everywhere did not exist. These communities had distinctive ways of bringing up their children, socializing them and teaching them those skills

and values they thought appropriate. Their connection with their land and the wider environment provided them the opportunities to hunt, gather, fish or farm and offered them the subject matter for what was to be conveyed to the next generation. There was no uniformly followed educational discourse that was similar for all the inhabitants of Namibia during the pre-colonial era. The children were brought up and socialized in their relevant cultural practices through talk and activity, not by way of literacy practices. During the pre-colonial time, then, the knowledge that that was taught was in line with people's ways of life and deeply embedded in community activity and values. According to Salia-Bao (1991, p. 11) and Likando (2008, p. 5), children were socialized to become hardworking, independent and self-providing as they grew into adulthood through participation, imitation, observational learning, and learning folk tales and through practical activities.

Buys and Nambala (2003, pp. 1-7) explain that during this phase of history, traditional theology and a belief in God existed among Namibians. God, the Supreme Being and the creator of the universe, was variously known as Kalunga (Oshiwambo); Mukuru or Ndjambi-Karunga (Otjiherero); Mulimu or Nyambe (Lozi); Modimo (Tswana); Karunga (Rukwangali); Iretha or Simwine (Subiya); Xgamab (Damara); and !Khub (Xwaga). Each of these communities had their own mythological traditions about the origin of mankind, nature and attributes of God, including ideas regarding the presence and acts of God. Various traditions consider the supremacy of God differently, including God's approachability through various mediators, especially by way of ancestral hierarchies, with no individual direct conduct with God due to his Supremacy and the worthlessness of men in his eyes. Ancestral adoration or veneration remains at the heart of the Namibian traditional religious experience. It is the foundation of the people's active religion. The deceased ancestors are regarded as the guardian spirits of the family and the clan. The veneration of the ancestors at the 'ritual fire' or 'holy fire' (ezuko, okuruwo) is a prominent example, which is still maintained in many rural communities today where it is used to invoke the ancestral link for security and wellbeing. The pre-Christian religious experience also forms part of child upbringing, especially in rural settings where strong traditional practices are still maintained, and children continue to be socialized into these practices, alongside the Christian religious experience.

2.1.4 Concluding remarks

Smith (1926, p. 15) argued that the 'Africans are artistic and musical by nature; their social sense is very highly developed; they are deeply religious; among their languages are to be found some of the most wonderful instruments of speech that the world knows; and a good workman, manual and menial labor'. While these views might appear to be stereotype and patronizing, they provide a contrast to many of the pejorative and racist views that also appeared in colonial times. Indeed, indigenous values and practices continue to be observed across regions of Namibia, even though they are fast being influenced by contemporary forces of modernization and globalization.

Many non-western ways of child-raising have survived in many marginal social settings. As Watson (1982, p. 14) has put it, with increased colonial influence, the value of pre-colonial education that was based on the various cultural practices of the people started to fade in many communities, while western ways were introduced as missionary and colonial education increased over time.

The pre-colonial period however had its unfavorable dimensions as well, with incidences of violent and often brutal conflict amongst indigenous groups. Pakenham (1991, p. 605) refers to a crippling territorial struggle between two semi-nomadic peoples: the Herero cattle-raisers of the arid central plateau and the Nama cattle-raisers of the still more arid steppes to the south. It was a war of cattle grazing – a grim sort of pastoral war – and it exhausted the resources of both African contestants, including the supply of guns and cartridges they bought from European traders. It also threatened, in the long term, the pockets of traders themselves, some of whom were German, as well as the spiritual labors of the Rhenish Mission Society who had come to evangelize the Herero. Other challenges were those of disease, drought and famine that threatened indigenous groups' very existence from time to time.

2.2 Role of the missionaries in providing education

The responsibility of teaching fell to pastors and their practice aimed at making the indigenous people civilized and better workers, with literacy being used as a tool of power and control. The indigenous peoples' ways of living and practices came to be considered by western societies as

being barbaric, pagan or satanic. The missionaries put asunder the things that hold the indigenous people together and instead forged and persuaded them to follow the Christian doctrine. They viewed the indigenous people as having a deficit which had existed before their arrival, resulting in them being pagans and uncivilized and therefore in need of remedy or treatment in the form of literacy. This resulted in the establishment of churches and schools as places where such remediation could be provided to a privileged few, in the form of the generic skills of reading, writing and arithmetic, the purpose of which was to produce docile, compliant workers who would be able to deliver as per their masters' agenda, that of colonial annexation. The proceeding paragraphs shows how missionaries entered and settled in Namibia with a Bible in the one hand and the gun in the other to establish their missions, build schools, convert locals and protect their subjects and their establishments.

2.2.1 Land occupation

According to Buys and Nambala (2003, p, 9), the London Missionary Society (LMS), which was founded in 1795 in England, began working in Namibia in 1805, moving north from the Cape Colony. Lau (1987, p. 4) points out that Little Namaqualand referred to the north-western areas of the Cape Colony, while the Great Namaqualand referred to the area beyond the Orange River (Namibia). She further reports that in 1805 missionaries Johann and Christian Albrecht entered the country of the Great Namaquas after crossing the Orange River. According to Lau, the Namaland in Southern Namibia was inhabited by the Nama, the Damara and the Bushmen, a diverse group of people. Buys and Nambala (2003, pp. 9-14) state that during October 1806 the Albrecht brothers of the LMS established the first permanent Christian mission at Warmbad in the south. At Warmbad the Albrechts immediately started a school, the first formal educational institute in Namibia. It was attended by children from the Bondelswarts and the Orlams clans of Jonker Afrikaner. The training was mainly religious and a preparation for baptism and a Christian life. The training included games, reading and writing, singing for public worship and skills of masonry (brickwork) and agriculture. LMS policy required that its missionaries be self-supporting. In 1820 the LMS decided to discontinue its work in Great Namaqualand. In 1822 Schmelen, a LMS missionary married to a Nama wife, and who continued the mission work among the Nama people after the discontinuation of the mission, was asked to translate the New Testament into the Nama Language, which was duly printed in 1831.

All missionary activities of the LMS were taken over by the Wesleyans (Methodist missionary) in the 1830s, although the LMS continued to work in Namibia until 1840. Missionary successes started to be recorded at Noasanabis (now Leonardville) from 1842 to 1851. According to Lau (1987, p. 76), the missionaries acted as anchor for the community and many polities only emerged as groups when a missionary came to stay or a church was built, or both. Lau (1987, pp. 77-78) further points out that these missionaries also played crucial roles, not only in establishing but also in maintaining permanent settlements by helping to set up agricultural production. Such large-scale agricultural production resulted in stable settlements able to protect it against raids, as the missionaries provided access to guns and ammunition. The missionaries also maintained a trade network with the Cape.

With the expansion of the Rhenish Missionary Society's activities, both the London and the Wesleyan Missionary Societies decided to relinquish their activities in Namibia, leaving the missionary field entirely to the German missionary society. They were followed, from 1840 onwards, by German and Finnish Lutheran missionaries. The German Rhenish Lutheran Mission (*Rhenish-of the river Rhine*) was one of the largest missionary societies in Germany after their amalgamation on 23 September 1828, and the first missionaries were ordained and sent to South Africa during the same year. These missionaries started to migrate north through the barren and inhospitable regions of south-western Africa. Du Plessis (1965, p. 340) highlights the challenges of the missionary work during this period by citing Külz, who encapsulated this in a few sentences:

> With what endurance and energy did these first Rhenish missionaries work among the vagrant Namas, and among the proud Hereros, with their contempt for all White men. No disappointments, no losses, no dangers to life and limb could discourage them. Repeatedly they recommenced their laborious work from the very start, for many years without visible outward results. For decades they were distressed and endangered by the racial wars between the Namaqua and the Bantu, without the least protection on the part of any State, and cast wholly upon themselves and their own slender material resources.

Katjavivi (1988, p. 6) argues that the German Rhenish Lutheran Mission believed in its own 'civilizing' mission, which centered on the promotion of European culture as much as on the Bible message itself. The Director of the Rhenish Missionary Society in the late nineteenth century, F. Fabri, saw mission work as 'useful' for trade or colonial annexation and one particular missionary, C. G. Buttner, 'strove zealously to promote German colonial government in South West Africa.' According to Lau (1987, p. 119-120), the intention of the Rhenish Mission Society was to destroy Jonker Afrikaner's nascent state structure in order to weaken any local political power that might resist the forthcoming German annexation of the area.

2.2.2 Early childhood education

According to Haihambo et al. (2006: 9), early childhood education centers were first introduced by the missionaries during the colonial era. They were often church-based institutions that had an overall aim of introducing children to basic reading, writing and numeracy skills, while socializing with peers who were not necessarily members of their clan. The children would be brought together at a central place and would learn some basic literacy skills through play and rhymes. These centers were generally known as kindergartens.

2.2.3 General education

The missionaries began educational work before the colonial governments. According to Prah (2009, p. 1) and Spolsky (2004, p. 50), the emergence of the majority of African languages, as written forms, and as we know them today, were made possible through the agency and the work of Christian missionary groups. The missionaries introduced European educational practices to the local communities where they started to work. Watson (1982, p. 13) and Storeng (1994, p. 72), see the conversion of the indigenous people to Christianity as the main purpose of the missionary societies. Their objective was to proselytize among the indigenous people, give prospective catechists a rudimentary education and change the cultural practices of Africans to conform to those associated with piety and order in Christian Europe. Towards these ends, they purposed to teach basic literacy so that pupils could read the Bible and memorize the catechism. This often resulted in the development of orthographies for local languages, pioneering instruction in vernacular languages and the translating of the Bible into these same languages. As Katzao (1999, p. 21) points out, the missionaries learned the vernacular languages of the local people with whom they worked, developed orthographies, compiled dictionaries and text books

and translated the Bible so as to make it readable through the use of local languages. Stroud (2007, p. 26), stresses that the 'regulation and knowledge of the indigenous languages was used as a control tool by the colonizers to insert itself on its subjects' and we can see the translating and orthographic projects of the missionaries in this light. Indigenous languages were invented in standardized forms imagined by colonial linguists, rather than in ways that corresponded to the variety of local speech practices encountered by the linguists. Stroud further points out that in this way, colonial linguists provided the Western self with knowledge of subject peoples and the means to communicate in ways that were to the advantage of the colonizers and which rendered the colonial reality comprehensible to the European modern mind (Stroud, 2007, p. 27).

In line with Stroud, Prah (2009. p. 14) also explains that the missionary translators naturally imported their orthographic preferences, prejudices and biases into the work they produced. The way they wrote their home languages and assumed a close link between language and ethnicity, invariably affected how they wrote and developed grammars for African languages. He shows, for example, that despite the fact that the dialectal variants of Oshivambo are at least 95 percent mutually intelligible, the Oshikwanyama and Oshindonga each have different Bibles and a separate linguistic identity. The missionary religious linguistic discourse in Namibia as elsewhere, e.g. in Mozambique (as explained by Stroud, 2007, p. 32) clearly served as a political tool aimed to change the cultural patterns of the indigenous people in line with European cultural practices, behavior and morality.

2.2.4 Concluding remarks

Before the Europeans started showing interest in Africa, Africans followed their own traditional cultural practices and religious beliefs. Western Christianity as a doctrine that aimed to win followers by spreading the gospel to others, saw the need to proselytize and convert Africans to Christianity. Missionaries discouraged the Africans from following their traditional religious beliefs which the missionaries considered to be barbaric, pagan or satanic practices and instead forged and persuaded them to follow the Christian doctrine. Versttraelen-Gilhuis (1992: 65) states that the history of the Christian missionary movement, which in large part paralleled the history of European expansion, has not yet been written from an African perspective. She argues that there was a need to shift the focus of interest 'from the perspective of those who invaded Africa (whatever their motives have been)', to 'that of the Africans who responded (negatively,

positively or indifferently) to the new religion and culture' (Versttraelen-Gilhuis, 1992, p. 70). There is a need for religious development before any encounter with Christianity and the changes that occurred in the course of interacting with Christianity to be studied if we are to point out the legacy of missionaries who were dispatched to Africa.

Ross (1986, p. 34) argues that depending on the particular strain a missionary subscribed to, they came to play various roles, and that 'political and social reform was seen as part of, or adjuncts of, the Gospel by many evangelicals but not by all'. For example, Ross (1986, p. 33) argues that Protestant Missionary (LMS) activity appeared to coincide with the economic and political emergence of Britain as the dominant power in the world, and as a result, the Christian missions were viewed as the cultural and spiritual arm of European Imperialism.

Ross (1986) explains that all evangelicals shared a nominal opposition to slavery until around 1830, when the relationship of the Gospel to political and social issues gave rise to two groups, the 'pietism' that was quiet about slavery and the 'evangelism' that was not. The conviction of pietists was that political and social change was of no concern to dedicated Christians. Just as hurricanes and famines produced suffering among people which the good Christian should try to ameliorate as best he or she could, so with the results of political and social injustice. They held that to be concerned over bringing about the amelioration of social or political conditions was to stray from the path of Christian dedication, and such concern was, in any case, pointless because of the fallen state of this world. Evangelism, on the other hand, was open to a belief that social and political issues were central to the concerns of a Christian. Though many of their men and women were not directly influenced by these issues and the problems they raised, in another sense concern about social and political change was central.

2.3 Education under the German occupation

Here it needs to be pointed out that the land occupation and the exploitation of the unknown riches of the interior remained the basic agenda under the German occupation. The Germans wanted land for settlement, cattle for export, gold and diamonds for mining – and Africans to work for long hours for little or no money (Pakenham, 1991, p. 606). Literacy during this period served the purpose of controlling the colonized while empowering the colonizers, i.e. it focused

on establishing power relations. Literacy levels remained low among the indigenous people because they had to learn another language apart from their own before they could learn to read and write. What it meant to be literate was to learn the colonizer's language in order to contribute to the advancement of the colonizer's agenda of self-empowerment and economic and social domination over the indigenous people. Literacy learning became the means of social and economic control, hence its restricted access to the local people, as evidenced in the following sections.

2.3.1 Land occupation

A wave of rinderpest in 1897 killed cattle and the plagues of malaria and typhoid (caused by the resultant shortage of milk) and invasions by locusts, all saw the German colony attract more immigrants up to around 1903, and more German capital, with ex-soldiers and ex-civil servants becoming traders and farmers (Pakenham, 1991). Poewe (1985, p. 56) argues that expropriation of land from the local people to give to the German settlers resulted in the Herero uprising and their consequent near-extermination. The colonial genocide that occurred during the German colonial era in 1904-1907 resulted in the killing of thousands of Herero men, women and children. Sarkin (2011, p. 110) argues that the methods employed demonstrated intent to commit genocide. There was no distinction made between killing combatants and non-combatants. He further argues that the most specific indication of the order for genocide was the proclamation issued by General Lothar von Trotha on 2 October 1904, declaring that:

> The Herero people will have to leave the country. Otherwise I shall force them to do so by means of guns. Within the German boundaries, every Herero, whether found armed or unarmed, with or without cattle, will be shot. I shall not accept any more women or children. I shall drive them back to their people otherwise I shall order them to be shot.

Further on Sarkin (2011, p. 113) points out another statement by Von Trotha:

> That nation must vanish from the face of the earth. Having failed to destroy them with guns, I will have to achieve my end in that way [the extermination order].

Katjavivi (1988, pp. 10-11) points out that the 1904 – 1907 war of resistance resulted in 75-80% of the Herero population being extinguished. The Namas also suffered dreadfully in the war of resistance. By 1911, 35-50% of the Nama population had been killed; it was down to 9,800 from an estimated 15,000-20,000 in 1892. After the war of resistance, the land of the Hereros and Namas were given to German settlers, who seized their cattle and forced them to become a source of cheap manual labor on the now White-owned land and the new mines and industries, without any rights or bargaining power. By 1911, most of the good land in the center and the south of the country that had previously been inhabited by Black Namibians were White-owned. Katjavivi (1988, pp. 11-12) further points out that the Germans never controlled or administered the northern part of Namibia beyond the so-called 'Red Line' (a veterinary cordon fence (VCF) that separates the animal health status of Northern Namibia from the central and the southern parts of the country), but used it as a source of labor, setting a pattern of forced labor under appalling conditions and poverty-level wages.

2.3.2 Early childhood education

Prochner and Kabiru (2008, p. 122) describe the status of early childhood education during the German colonial period. The German colonial administration introduced kindergartens to South West Africa (Namibia) in the years prior to World War I. These kindergartens were almost exclusively meant for the children of German colonialists, but, in some instances, were for 'Colored' children as well, until the latter were barred around 1905. The Woman's League of the German Colonial Society believed the kindergarten would provide employment for 'surplus' women in Germany and help settlers by removing their children from the 'danger' that African nannies and servants supposedly posed.

2.3.3 General education

The colonial powers introduced colonial languages as the dominant languages alongside which local languages had to survive (Patrick, 2007, p. 115), resulting in the devaluing of the latter. This situation resulted in local inhabitants who made contact with the colonizers starting to learn the dominant language, thereby becoming bilingual or multilingual if they also knew other local languages besides their mother tongue. Katjavivi (1988, p. 11) explains that during the German occupation, the missionaries were under instructions from the colonial authorities to confine education to the teaching of the Bible, and some German, rather than including reading and

writing. Cohen (1994, p. 62) claims that the missionaries aimed to Christianize indigenous people by emphasizing the literacy necessary for reading the Bible, hymn books and other evangelical literature. Cohen (1994, pp. 70-71) and Salia-Bao (1991, p. 16) explain that German rule and settlement led to two separate systems of education, one for the Europeans that was predominantly government-run and which provided better quality education, and one for the Africans, run entirely by the missionaries, and differentiating between Coloureds and Blacks. Schools for Europeans served to reproduce the German schooling system. The system for the Africans mainly focused on teaching conversational German and then on preparing them for semi-skilled employment on settlement farms. According to Katzao (1999, p. 21) and Storeng (1994, p. 86), the establishment of schools for Africans and their control were left to the missionaries. Katzao points out that schools were established in order to supplement the work of Christianization, to give a rudimentary education to catechists and to change cultural patterns that were considered to be pagan. Not only churches, but schools were built to achieve this aim (Katzao, 1999, p. 20).

Katzao (1999, pp. 22-23) explains that in 1890 the German Rhenish mission opened schools at Okahandja for the various Black children and one at Keetmanshoop for Coloureds. It is thus clear that a policy of race segregation had already been put in place with the German occupation of Namibia. Katzao (1999) claims that both the German Rhenish and the Finnish Lutheran Churches considered it their task to preach the Gospel, to live up to it strictly and to act as advisers and educators in every sphere of Ovambo life. An important contribution made by the Finnish church, he claims, was in the domain of medical care, where Finnish female doctors and nurses made a contribution. Attention was paid to the training of Ovambo medical staff and especially nurses, because it was Finnish tradition that medical work be done mainly by women. The Finnish missions introduced European medicine, religion and agricultural methods and crop cultivation to Ovambo (Katzao, 1999, p. 23).

Du Plessis (1965: 368) points out that the Roman Catholic Church was late in making its appearance in Namibia. The church attempted to settle in 1878, but the opposition of Tjaherani, chief of Omaruru, compelled them to beat a retreat. The attempt to found a Catholic mission among the Herero was not renewed until 1896, when the Oblates of Mary Immaculate entered

the field. German authority had by this time been established over the country, and Governor Leutwein, while permitting the catholic priests to engage in mission work, stipulated that they should keep at a due distance from centers already effectively occupied by the Rhenish mission. This limitation was, however, finally removed in 1905, when by imperial orders in council, religious freedom and tolerance were guaranteed to all creeds and denominations.

Cohen (1994, p. 65) and Katzao (1999, p. 22) both claim that the Roman Catholic mission schools were established well after the German Rhenish teaching institutions. In the Catholic schools the emphasis was on teaching trades to boys and housekeeping to girls, besides the missionaries' primary role of teaching pupils to read, write and understand the Bible. The language most generally used was German and instruction in the mother tongue had a subordinate role. Cohen points out that the teaching was didactic and mechanistic with an emphasis on rote learning. Instilling the values of 'obedience, order, punctuality, sobriety, honesty, diligence and modernization' was considered more important than academic learning (Cohen, 1994, p. 67).

According to Katzao (1999, p. 23), the first government schools were established at Windhoek and Gibeon in 1900, at Keetmanshoop, Swakopmund and Grootfontein in 1901, and Kharibib in 1903. He explains that at that time there were no permanent school buildings, and teaching took place in any premises that happened to be available: in living rooms, vacant offices, corrugated iron barracks – even in a hotel hall and a hospital ward. He adds that schools were eventually built and by 1904 there were six state schools for Europeans throughout the territory. Teachers came from various parts of Germany and were products of different education systems. Katzao and Storing explain that owing to the lack of a senior official in charge of educational matters, and of a prescribed syllabus, teachers followed their own initiative (Katzao, 1999, p. 23; Storeng, 1994, p. 87). According to Katzao, most of the pupils outside Lüderitz, Swakopmund and Windhoek were scattered throughout the country and had to be accommodated in hostels (Katzao, 1999, p. 24).

Katzao (1999) claims that Afrikaners disliked the German education system, as it ignored their language and their religion but the government then appointed German teachers who could speak

Dutch. He points out that teachers were even sent to the Cape to learn Dutch, and were then appointed to districts with Afrikaner majorities. Religious teaching in Dutch was also permitted (Katzao, 1998, p. 25). He explains that funds collected in Germany during the Second Anglo-Boer War (1899 – 1902) provided scholarships to Afrikaner children but not to African children, to enable them to attend government schools (Katzao, 1998, p. 25). Katzao also points out that after provision had been made for schools, hostels and an adequate number of qualified teachers, a regulation in 1911 extended compulsory school attendance to at least four years where children were living more than four kilometers from a school center (Katzao, 1998, p. 25). This regulation was not applicable to the indigenous children and was also difficult to enforce for the whites due to their dispersed nature. Secondary schools gradually started to appear, with the Kaiserliche Realschule being the first in 1909, growing to 20 by 1913, for Whites who were spread over the territory. A central school organization and an educational administration gradually developed, culminating in a creation of a 'department of education' after the Herero War (1904 – 1907) (Katzao, 1999, p. 25; Storeng, 1994, p. 85).

According to Katzao (1999, p. 26), in 1913 all African Schools were placed under the control of the colonial government. From 1909 the German authorities accorded a subsidy of DM 9 000 per year to schools for Africans, while DM 329 000 was spent on White education for the year 1914/1915 alone (Katzao, 1999, p. 27). Katzao states that this pattern of financing was clearly unequal and no doubt had an influence on the education outcomes for the two groups, setting a trend of unequal education financing for years to come. Cohen (1994, p. 73), argues that the better organization and control, compulsory education and better facilities all resulted in Whites having an advantage over the other population groups in terms of educational exposure, and tended to inculcate feelings of superiority. In this light, he cites the example of a government-subsidized farm school established for girls near Windhoek, teaching them how to run farms, how to treat Black servants and how to train them to be diligent workers. Storeng (1994, p 87) points out that it was emphasized that young Africans were in the first place to be trained as reliable and intelligent workers.

Religion, reading and writing in the mother-tongue, arithmetic, German (Rhenish missionaries), singing, nature study, geography, local studies, history and writing practice were the main

subjects taught. Katzao points out that the Rhenish Mission founded an elementary teacher training institution, the Augustineum, at Otjimbingwe as early as 1866, which was transferred to Okahandja in 1890. He further explains that the little education that indigenous people received in the 'three Rs' was not sufficient to prepare them for the economic and (later on) political development of Namibia (Katzao, 1999, p. 27).

2.3.4 Concluding remarks

The Herero and Nama genocide during 1904-1907, combined with the effects of World War I, resulted in the annexation of the area in 1915 by South Africa. During this time, missionaries' reactions ranged from compassion and help for the local tribes, to patriotism and support of colonial interests. In mission schools in Namibia, as elsewhere, the ideas of freedom, nationalism and democracy were mainly discussed in mission schools. Watson (1982, p. 37) argues that the mission schools were also often unifying institutions for different ethnic and linguistic groups in society since here they were all treated as equals, therefore creating hope for the emergence of one nation.

According to Buys and Nambala (2003, 29-39), the church saw its calling in a broader and deeper perspective, becoming involved in educational, social, cultural, economic and political arenas of life. As foreigners, the missionaries represented foreign culture; they had fire-arms, transport vehicles, the skills of writing, advanced forms of buildings, specialized agriculture, health services, schools teaching the gospel and the knowledge that books gave them. Missionary education covered worship service and study service, they used reading, writing and arithmetic, established schools and church buildings, taught morality and limited medical training. In the economic sphere, they built roads, provided training in manual skills and were involved in trade and commerce, while politically they contributed to permanent settlements of nomadic groups, mediated peace during inter-group conflicts, as well as between colonial governments and the oppressed.

2.4 Education under South African rule

During this period, the colonizer had no intention to share the country's wealth and socio-economic privileges with the colonized and therefore shaped an education system to maintain their political and economic dominance. Exposure to literacy was not conceived as an unlimited

opportunity, but rather an opportunity to have access to a particular way of viewing the world and to a particular system of values – apartheid (Tapscott, 1993). Here schools were to be used along with economic, administrative and military measures as a means of assimilating the children with the approved values system. Thus, literacy learning was governed by a political agenda; it was meant for a selected few, defined along color lines (Wikan et al. 2007). The domination by the White colonial masters could be achieved not only by effectively denying access to some forms of education, but also by setting up a dominant language for education, politics, business and ritual, which became Afrikaans (see Houston, 1983 for similar observation). This managerialist discourse resulted in an elite form of education that had been available to the upper class, which consisted of the White colonial masters who had power and control, while for the rest of the people schooling served to produce moral, orderly, disciplined, docile, deferential, contented and compliant workers (Sguazzin and van Graan, 1999; MEC, 1993). Thus, literacy resulting from schooling was considered a dangerous possession for the working class rather than as a necessary catalyst for social change, development and improving the quality of life, hence it was availed to a few inhabitants of Namibia for fear of social unrest and discontent (Banda et al. 2012).

The following paragraphs demonstrate the uneven and unfair sharing of natural resources and distribution of schooling among the different people of Namibia under the apartheid era as a way to maintain White supremacy over the rest of the local inhabitants. Nonetheless, the systematic development and achievement of literacy and schooling as part of the individual and his/her personal development (i.e. an autonomous view of literacy) resulted in the workers' demands for justice, independence and sovereignty for Namibia from colonial apartheid.

2.4.1 Land occupation

On 9 July 1915 the German troops in South West Africa surrendered to the South African Forces. Under the Peace Treaty, Germany renounced her colonies, not to the League of Nations, but to the Great Powers. The Great Powers passed a resolution in Paris in May 1919, conferring various mandates, and in the case of South West Africa the mandate was given to the Union of South Africa. The League of Nations was only concerned with one aspect, namely to define the scope of the mandate in any particular area (Braum, 1976). The terms of the South West Africa mandate were finally communicated to the South African government by the League's Secretary-

General on 11 February 1921. The ultimate and fundamental objective of the mandate was the development by the Mandatory Power of the inhabitants of the Mandated Territories until they reached a stage where they could stand alone (Goldblatt, 1961). A military governor was appointed by the South African Minister of Defense and authorized to take all measures, and by proclamation to make such laws, and enforce the same, as he might deem necessary for the peace, order, and good government of the territory. The military government in the territory was withdrawn as from 1 January 1921, and the power which had previously been vested in the Governor-General was delegated to an Administrator of the Territory (Cockram, 1976). The Union Government could in terms of the mandate extend to South West Africa its legal, judicial, administrative and financial systems, its civil service, its police and its railway administration and could give parliamentary representation, the only limit being in regard to natives (Braum, 1976).

In 1921, the Native Reserves policy (these Reserves were later also known as Homelands or Bantustans), where a territory was set aside for Black inhabitants of South West Africa (now Namibia), was introduced in keeping with the policy of Apartheid of the South African administration. Demarcated areas were assigned to various ethnic groups in Namibia. The country's population was classified into twelve groups, namely the Ovambos, Kavangos, Caprivians, Twanas, Damaras, Hereros, Kaokovelders, Bushmen, Coloreds, Rehoboth Basters, Namas and Whites. Each group, with the exception of the Whites and Coloreds, was to occupy its own homeland (Katzao, 1999, p. 11). The Colored people referred to above are people of Southern Africa who speak Afrikaans as their home language. They migrated from Cape Town to Namibia from the early 1920s. By and large the so-called Colored people practiced a wide range of professions, including education, civil service, agriculture, mining, commerce and trade. Adhikari (2009, p. 2) points out that today there is intense interest in the study of the nature and history of the Colored identity by people who identify themselves as Colored. There seems to exist various competing interpretations of who Colored people were and what the concept of coloredness embodied. For example, according to those whose explanations are based on the deliberate divide and rule tactics by the dominant White supremacist, South Africa accepted that Colored people formed a separate race. Absalom (2001, p. 31) describes the Coloreds as a mixed group of Whites, Indians and Asians. According to Absalom (2001, p. 59), the Native Urban

Areas Act in a Proclamation of 1924, describes a Colored as a person who is 'clearly not native and clearly not White'. Celliers (1971, p. 1) states that 'the Colored population originated as a result of White settlement at the Cape more than three centuries ago. Through this event and the subsequent processes of biological and cultural assimilation between slaves, aborigines and Whites, coupled with a growing tendency towards social differentiation on the basis of color, a population group which at the same time, as a result of its close integration into the economic, religious and political structure of the dominant White pattern of life, gradually assumed also the social and cultural characteristics of the dominant White Western society'. Adhikari (2009, p. 13) points to a social constructionist perspective that explains how and why Colored identity came into existence and how it has found expression. This new order views Colored identity as a historically specific social construction, like any other social identity (Adhikari, 2009, p. 15).

Storeng (1994, p. 77), points out that Black people's daily lives were controlled and restricted by a number of laws: they were not allowed to leave the homelands, except for contract labor or other work, but had to wear a pass, a form of an identification document, indicating were they came from and their current status, e.g. a contract laborer at a mine or worker at road construction company at a particular site or region in the country.

2.4.2 Early childhood education

According to Hengari et al. (2003, p. 7) the South African colonial administration ran state-sponsored pre-primary education for White children only. The second-tier governments for Coloreds and Basters also provided pre-school services to limited numbers of children under their control in the 1980s. Many Black children entering school did not have the early learning experiences that prepared middle-class and children of the elite for school.

2.4.3 General education

The German education system was abolished and replaced by a system that was used in the Cape Province as formulated in the Education Proclamation of 1921 (Storeng, 1994, p. 90). Storeng explains that a proclamation laid down the basis for principles of education for each ethnic group, and that a second proclamation in 1926 provided for compulsory attendance up to Standard 8 or the tenth school year for all White children between the ages of seven and sixteen. Katjavivi (1988, p. 27) points out that the first state school for Africans set up by the South African regime was opened in the Aminuis reserve in 1935, after a series of protests by the Herero people about inadequate education. He also explains that what the Africans wanted, and which the White settlers rejected, was assimilative education in a European language, as this was seen as the route to high wages, equality and power (Katjavivi, 1988, p. 27).

In 1953, as a result of the policy of separate development, the education of Whites was taken over by the Department of National Education (Katzao, 1999, p. 28). The Bantu Education Act, No. 47 of 1953, was adopted, resulting in the establishment of a Directorate of Bantu Education that took responsibility for the education of Black people. The South African Bantu Education policy was extended to cover Namibia following the Van Zyl Commission of 1958 and was only replaced in Namibia in 1977 (Katzao, 1999, p. 29). The introduction of South Africa's Bantu Education structures led to the handing over of church schools to the state, the introduction of the mother-tongue of the various designated communities as the medium of instruction, and separate administration of Black or indigenous education under the South West African Department of Education (Storeng, 1994, p. 93). Storeng (1994, p. 95) points out that only four years of Primary Education were made compulsory, with:

- only 20% of those completing four years allowed to proceed to higher primary education;
- ethnic differences to be strengthened, with one secondary school for each tribal group; and
- only two high schools to provide education up to matriculation (university entry) for all tribal groups.

These arrangements ensured restricted education for all those designated as Blacks/Africans. Given the limited duration of attendance at schools during this era, and those who were allowed

to proceed to the following phase of schooling, this was bound to hinder the development of literacy among the majority of the local people; they did not receive the cultural capital that would allow them to be assimilated with the culture of the social and political elites.

Katjavivi (1988, p. 72) and Cohen (1994, p. 45) make a similar point, namely that the Odendaal Commission in 1962/63 argued for separate development of White and Black Namibians on the grounds of apartheid. They explain that 11 separate Black authorities were proposed along ethnic lines in the homelands, each with its own legislative council, with Basters retaining their traditional area and Council, whereas the Coloreds who were urban dwellers had a council of their own. The residual 'White areas' comprised good farming land, the mines, diamond areas, towns and economic infrastructure (Katjavivi, 1988, p. 72; Cohen, 1994, p. 45). Schools were built and teachers trained along these segregated lines and female teachers admitted for training as lower primary teachers after they had completed Standard 4. Cohen (1994, p. 88) also shows that teacher training for Blacks was offered at colleges after Standard 8 for the Primary Teacher's Certificate, and that there were only four teacher training establishments for Blacks: the government-run Augustineum, the Catholic training school at Döbra, and two Finnish training institutions at Ongwediva and Okahao. Katzao (1999, p. 32) points out that post-primary technical training of indigenous people, mainly in the fields of carpentry, building and low-level skills, was needed to service extractive industries or farming. In 1975, trade and vocational training institutes were replaced with advanced/technical training institutes, which were maintained until independence (Katzao, 1999, p. 32).

Watson (1982, p. 36) argues that the most striking difference between schools for Europeans and Blacks at this time was the difference in both quality and quantity. Blacks were not seen as suited to an education beyond a certain level as their culture was considered subordinate to colonial culture. The colonial schools did not teach the indigenous people about the traditions of their own society from which he/she came, nor did they develop skills which would be useful in that society. As a result, many who attended these schools were deprived of a socially relevant education. They learned content that had no practical utility and did not fit in to the colonizers' society after their school exposure. Katzao and Likando (2010, p. 96) point out that under the apartheid dispensation, sustained access to education and training was limited to a privileged

few, resulting in the education of small elite, defined along color lines, and that this was also achieved through an assessment system for Black students that laid emphasis on rote learning.

2.4.4 Concluding remarks

During the 1960s, as the European powers started granting independence to their colonies and the Trust territories in Africa, pressure mounted on South Africa to facilitate independence in South West Africa. The U.N. General Assembly terminated South Africa's rule by mandate in 1966. South West Africa became a direct responsibility of the UN, and its right to nationhood and independence was confirmed in UNGA Resolution 2145. The struggle for independence continued and on New Year's Eve the Constituent Assembly voted unanimously for South West Africa to become independent on 21 March 1990 and assume its new name, Namibia (Buys & Nambala, 2003; Dierks, 2002).

Colonialism can be regarded as a political project that aimed to expand European interests through the conquest of geographical regions elsewhere, along with their inhabitants (Stroud, 2007, p. 25; Patrick, 2007, p. 114). Katzao (1999, p. 34) argues that colonial education was employed to facilitate the economic and social domination of the colonizers over the indigenous people and that for the same reason the education systems designed for Africans were not only limited in scope, but also failed to reach the masses, resulting from a 'politics of exclusion and the politics of difference' (Heller, 2007, p. 27). Such a view of colonialism stresses a history of exploitation, disdain and racism in place of stability, docility and benevolence, and consequences included protracted riots and resistance. The question that remains is: Why did the colonialist have such bad educational intentions as regards the people of Namibia? Shilongo (2004, p. 1) argues that colonial education was designed to:

- Produce the privileges of the ruling class
- Reproduce the skills and attitudes required for maintaining a colonial society
- Serve as an instrument of oppression

The colonial education system did not allow the majority of Black inhabitants of Namibia access to what Bourdieu (1991) calls 'economic capital', which could have helped them participate in

the sharing of wealth and socio-economic privileges in the country. The colonizers shaped an education system to maintain their political and economic dominance, which they knowingly pursued.

2.5 Post-Independence Educational Developments in Namibia

At independence, Namibia inherited legacies with which the Education Ministry had to grapple in order to make educational provision more inclusive and equal for its citizenry and to replace difference with commonality. The country's education system had been designed to reinforce apartheid rather than to provide the necessary human resource base to promote equitable social and economic development. A system that had fostered a well-looked after minority group needed to be changed, on the one hand, and the massive Third World backlog regarding mass educational provision that needed to be addressed, on the other. Inequality between schools and among racial and ethnic groups that characterized the colonial era had to be redressed and its education and public services based on ethnic and racial differences had to be centralized. Namibia therefore, as a product of colonialism, continues with its inherited colonial educational discourse, what Stroud (2007, p. 27) calls its 'post-coloniality', while re-conceptualizing its new national emancipatory education discourse.

At independence, education became the means through which to bring about political change, and literacy came to have an 'empowering' or 'liberating' effect (Barton, 2007, p. 27). The emphasis was on extending literacy from scholarly elites to the whole population. Literacy became a highly political act as 'the oppressed' struggled against the hegemony of the ruling elites – the oppressors (Searle, 1999, p. 4). Thus literacy became the means to bring about radical social and political change (i.e. literacy for social action – transformation). Literacy was therefore conceptualized in the emancipatory discourses of Paulo Freire, which enabled the learners to transform their social situations through dialogue and conscientization so that they become 'beings for themselves' rather than 'beings for others' (Freire, 1993, p. 55). For Freire, literacy learning is ongoing and developmental and 'serves as a set of cultural practices that promotes democratic and emancipatory change', which is in fact the essence of 'reading which always involves critical perception, interpretation and rewriting of what is read' (Bell, 1993, p.

146). Consequently the emphasis came to be placed on using education as a tool to engage and avail opportunities to the 'oppressed' people to emancipate themselves through education.

This section on postcolonial education in Namibia consists of four sub-sections. First, early childhood education in Namibia is examined, again drawing on secondary sources , and developing an overview of the background, achievements and future challenges that face the early childhood development phase of education. A brief overview of general education provision is then presented, followed by an examination of the language-in-education policy of Namibia, covering the Namibian languages, the policy pronouncement and the implementation in schools. The section concludes with a brief reflection on the possible limitations that could result from laying down the learner-centered approach in literacy teaching practice, suggesting instead a 'social practice account' to literacy learning. The purpose of this review is to set the scene and provide an account of the dynamics that shape my own case study research on particular children's early literacy leaning in homes and schools.

2.5.1 Early childhood education

2.5.1.1 Approach towards the provision of early childhood education

Early childhood service delivery took on both formal and non-formal approaches. As Evans, Myers and Ilfeld (2000, p. 109) explain, formal programs were associated with the public sector and operated in a purpose-built facility that met some standards. They were staffed by individuals with some form of training, and they followed a set curriculum. Non-formal programs were outside of the public sector and were mostly not operating within a purpose-built structure, they were staffed by teachers who may or may not have had training, and if the program had a curriculum at all, it was generally determined by distant managers, with no input from those implementing the program. Evans et al. (2000, p. 109) also recognize that there was a blurring of the formal and non-formal programs.

In contemporary Namibia, we have a mixed salad of the above programs. A non-formal program was rolled-out under the National Early Childhood Development Committee (NECDC) to coordinate the efforts of all stakeholders in early childhood education. Iithete et al. (2000, p. 18) stress that early childhood development provision was to be expanded through the creation of

partnerships and that the programs developed in collaboration with the community. All the efforts of government, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), churches, and the private sectors were coordinated to work with communities as they developed programs for young children. According to Iithete et al. (2000, p. 18), this approach was based on the following assumptions about the role of the family and the state:

- The primary responsibility for the support of a child's healthy growth and development lies with the family.
- The state through partnership shall ensure to the maximum extent possible the survival and development of the child.

The concept of 'community' applies on a national scale, regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in it (Anderson, 1983, p. 15-16). Haihambo et al. (2006, p. 14) claim that after independence, the Ministry of Basic Education found that it was costly to give support to early childhood programs. Haihambo et al. (2006, p. 14) point out that as a consequence in 1994 the Ministry of Basic Education suspended its support to pre-primary programs, citing financial constraints and low enrolment figures that were also along racial lines: Most of the centers that were functional served children from the formerly advantaged groups. All these services ceased to be government-owned and were now left to local communities to take control of and manage the Integrated Early Childhood development (IECD) activities. Since then, communities have become the main role-players in the provision of early childhood care and education programs. With limited human and material resources, communities have continued to provide IECD programs of various types. According to Hengari and Zimba (2003, p. 7) ECD provision after independence took the form of childcare programs and pre-schools. One form of ECD provision is home-based custodial care that caregivers provide to children of working parents.

The National Integrated Early Childhood Development Policy (2007: 11) shows that the current arrangement is that the Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare (MGECW) is mandated by decree to cater for the welfare of all children aged 0-8 years. In particular, it is the

responsibility of the MGECW to see to the needs of all children in the 0-4+ age group, or until they enter preschool.

As children enter pre-school, at the age of five or six, they join the formal programs at pre-schools that are operated by the Ministry of Education (MOE) or other private preschool programs, as all preschools have not yet been made public. There is an overlap of public and private sector efforts, and the programs contain characteristics of both formal and non-formal programs. The biggest difference between the two programs is that those who work in non-formal programs are not on the public payroll, while those in the more formal programs under the Ministry of Education are government employees. Since pre-primary education was brought back under the control of the Ministry of Education through the Education and Training Sector Improvement Program (ETSIP), the establishment of a pre-primary year in primary schools for children aged five to six years old was introduced. The Ministry of Education introduced a six-year pilot program from 2008 to 2013 at primary schools. Its aim was to give children from poor backgrounds access to pre-primary education. The pilots took place at selected primary schools in the Khomas, Karas, Caprivi and Ohangwena regions. The pre-primary phase of formal basic education covers a single year of school readiness activities before the commencement of primary education. To be admitted to the pre-primary school year the child should turn six during that year. The purpose of the pre-primary phase is to lay a solid foundation for lower primary learning, establishing self-confidence and self-worth through personal and social development (Ministry of Education, 2008).

2.5.1.2 Implementation of Namibia's early childhood education program

To capture the attention and support given to children after independence, a brief catalogue of some milestones follows. Hengari (2002, p. 6) and Haihambo et al. (2006, p. 7-8) explain that in 1990 the Namibian Parliament ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. The rights to health, education, play, justice, protection from violence are emphasized, along with equal treatment for all children, putting an end to exploitation and respecting children's views. In 1992, the Namibian cabinet adopted a Primary Health Care Policy which addressed the importance of providing proper nutrition, safe water, basic sanitation, education and training regarding health problems in communities, immunization against the major infectious diseases, and maternal and child health care. In 1996, the Early Childhood Development policy was

crafted by an inter-ministerial task force to support the various early childhood development initiatives targeted at children and their families throughout Namibia. In 2001 the Namibian Government declared 28 September as the day of the Namibian child. This day is commemorated every year although it is not an official public holiday. All these initiatives pertaining to the advancement of the rights of the child should be noted with caution. While they exist as formal policy, this does not mean that they are backed up by realistic strategies and resources or that they are all being accomplished equally.

The Namibian government has put policies in place but to put these policies into practice, to monitor their implementation and to evaluate their usefulness have remained a challenge. It is crucial that before the policy is implemented, it is operationalized by well-focused guidelines for its successful implementation as well as having a built-in component of monitoring and evaluation of its impact on the people affected by it. The various stakeholders, each with its limited human and capital resources, find the implementation of these policies, the monitoring and their evaluation difficult (see Haihambo et al. 2006; Fredericks, 2007; Namibia Office of the President, 2004; Khan and Khandaker, 2016 for similar observation). The following paragraphs that reflect on early childhood service provisions attest to the shortcomings regarding the services being provided.

2.5.1.2.1 Attendance

Notwithstanding the policies and the spelled-out responsibilities of stakeholders, the attendance of early childhood programs in Namibia as documented by the last national census of 2011 was indeed low. According to this census, a total of 283,501 children aged 0-4 years were counted and of this number, about 13% were attending ECD programs country-wide. Such Early Childhood Development (ECD) services include Educare (day care, crèche, kindergarten) and pre-primary school. However, access in urban areas was much better, resulting in almost one out of five children attending ECD facilities, compared to one out of ten children in rural areas. Slightly more girls than boys were enrolled in ECD programs in both rural and urban areas, as indicated in Table 1 below (Namibia, 2011, p. 47-48).

Area	Children aged 0-4 years			Attending ECD			Percentage attending		
	Total	Female	Male	Total	Female	Male	Total	Female	Male
Namibia	283 501	141 146	140 016	37 789	19 521	18 268	13.3	13.8	13.0
Urban	103 099	51 443	50 540	20 026	10315	9 711	19.4	20.1	19.2
Rural	180 402	89 703	89 476	17 763	9 206	8 557	9.8	10.3	9.6

Table 1: Population aged 0-4 years attending ECD by sex and area, Namibia, 2011 census, p. 48.

Children aged five years and above fall under the administrative auspices of the Ministry of Education. According to the 2011 census, the enrolment rate of children at pre-primary schools was 42.4 % for children aged five years and 66.4 % for children aged six years old respectively as indicated in Table 2 below. Slightly more girls than boys were enrolled at pre-primary schools.

Age	Total	Total at school	Enrolment rate	Percentage Female	Percentage Male
5	52 647	22 338	42.4	43.2	41.7
6	49 867	33 091	66.4	67.3	65.4

Table 2: School enrolment for school-going population (5-6 years) in Namibia, 2011 census, p. 122.

2.5.1.2.2 Types of ECD centers

The most common form of ECD service provision in Namibia is the center-based facility. These facilities are offered mainly in private homes, informal backyard structures, garages or under trees in rural areas. A limited number of more formal programs operate in urban areas, located at churches, community centers or facilities as well as in designated pre-school facilities (Ministry of Women Affairs and Child Welfare, 2007: 12).

Type of Early Childhood Development Program			
Area	Educare (daycare, crèches, kindergarten)	Pre-primary	Total
Namibia	59.6	40.4	100
Urban	61.8	38.224	100
Rural	57.1	42.9	100

Table 3: Population of 0-4 years of age attending by type of Early Childhood Development program and area, Namibia, 2011 Census (p. 48).

Table 3 reflects the percentage distribution of the children in ECD programs. Attendance in Educare programs is higher (59.6 %) than in pre-primary school (40.4 %). The crèches provide full-day care for children from infancy to three years of age, focusing on basic infant/child care with an element of stimulation and caregiver-child interaction. Some center-based childcare programs for the three-to-four-year-olds (with assistance from other stakeholders, such as public health, NGOs) offer educational, health, nutritional, developmental screening and social assistance services, while others not in a similar position may only have an educational component. Day care usually includes an educational component for the three-four-years-old children. The pre-primary school program for children aged five to six years promotes child development and prepares them for primary education (Iithete et al., 2000; Hengari & Zimba, 2003; Ministry of Woman Affairs and Child Welfare, 2007).

2.5.1.2.3 Teacher training

Teacher training for those who teach in the non-formal programs, and who were not trained before independence at the then 'White' teacher training colleges or outside Namibia, is delivered mostly through various initiatives such as workshops conducted by the MBESC in collaboration with the MWACW (now MGECW) and NGOs. This training often lasts up to two weeks and occurs twice a year. The teachers who receive this kind of training in early childhood education mostly run their own private centers or are employed among the communities outside the public sector. No government ministry has been tasked to employ teachers who received this basic training. To go through such training does not guarantee employment or any of the benefits available to all teachers in the employment of government (Iithete et al., 2000, p. 38). The teachers are at the mercy of the communities which they serve for their income. The parents of children who attend and use the service have to contribute financially to the running cost of those centers, including the salaries of the service providers. The cost of preschool education therefore has risen and better centers are attended by children of the rich, best educated and the well-to-do in communities.

The staff who went through the short courses during their training are supported through the ETSIP program to enroll in a distance study programs. Those who do not hold a Namibia Senior Secondary Education Certificate are required to first do an Early Childhood Certificate. Holders of the Grade 12 certificate may enroll for the Diploma in Early Childhood Development with the Namibia College of Open Learning (NAMCOL), while a fully articulated professional program, Bachelor of Education (pre-primary and lower primary) that prepares students to teach from the pre-primary phase to Grade 4, has been offered by the University of Namibia since 2011.

2.5.1.2.4 Approach taken to provide services

As noted under section 2.5.1.2 above, international as well as national initiatives serve as vehicles for raising awareness for the expansion and improvement of early childhood development, care and education services. Based on the recognition that all children should have access to appropriate supports right from birth, not just when they are old enough to attend a preschool, the Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare (MGECW) is tasked to see to the needs of all children in the 0 -5 age group. The Ministry of Education (MOE) takes on children as they enter pre-primary school from the age of five onwards. As a result of this division, there

is a clear move towards a balance in care and provision between those younger than the age of five and those above the age of five. While the traditional emphasis on preschools as preparation for formal schooling is being emphasized, there is also a focus on a range of community-based services to children who are most in need.

These innovative community-based services ranged from working with parents through one-to-one exchanges or through parent groups to facilitate the provision and the sharing of information about best practices to support their own development as well as that of their children (National Integrated Early Childhood Development Policy, 2007, p. 12). Such programs included a family visitors' program, a community-focused program, an orphan care program, a mentoring program, and promoting positive early childhood care practices among previously socially disadvantaged groups. Iithete et al. (2000, p. 23) point out that training packages, parent/community awareness materials (flip chart, posters, brochure, books), parenting materials, radio spots and plays on ECD issues, and translation of ECD materials produced in major Namibian languages have been performed and distributed to impact on maternal and child care practices at community level. As argued by Evans et al. (2000: 131), ultimately these programs' objectives are three-fold, firstly to empower caregivers in ways that would improve their care of the young children, secondly, improve their interaction with young children and finally, enrich the immediate environment within which children live.

2.5.1.3 Challenges

ECD in Namibia is facing various challenges. The Namibia Vision 2030 Main Document (2004) captured these challenges as follows:

- Sustainability of ECD Centers is endangered due to the absence of incentives for the ECD caregivers.
- ECD is not recognized as a profession in Namibia, and as a result ECD caregivers/workers are not motivated.
- A significant number of parents do not feel that ECD is important and, as a result, they are reluctant to send their children to ECD Centers.
- Lack of a universal curriculum for ECD caregivers and children, which leads to inadequate care (p. 98).

In 2005 Namibia coined the use of the concept Integrated Early Childhood Development (IECD). The first National ECD Policy was reviewed in 2007 to bring it in line with the changes that impacted on Namibian society. The review also took into account national policies, plans and programs that impacted positively on early childhood development such as Vision 2030 and the ETSIP Plan (Education and Training Sector Improvement Plan (2005-2010). The IECD programming has expanded to take into account aspects of health, nutrition, water and hygiene, and protection of rights as well as the child's psychosocial needs for affection, interaction, stimulation, security and learning through exploration and discovery. Central to this is all is the recognition of the mother-child dyad that emphasizes the direct link between the well-being of the mother and that of the child. This new approach calls for a multi-sector program that promotes health, nutrition, environmental sanitation, cognitive stimulation and protection of the child (MWCW, 2003, p. 1).

Currently one of the key issues within ECD provision is the quality of the services being provided. ECD programs are so under-resourced that they may, in fact, be unhealthy for young children. Haihambo et al. (2006, p. 79) show that quite a large number of IECD centers do not meet the physical requirements (space, shade, fencing, water, toilets); safety requirements (buildings offering safety, unwelcome objects such as broken pieces of glass, etc.); hygiene requirements (clean toilets, facilities for washing of hands, etc.); health requirements (centers should have first aid kits and caregivers should be trained to use them, health personnel to visit centers on a regular or even annual basis); nutritional requirements (well balanced meals to be provided by centers or parents). Due to poverty prevailing in many communities, and especially those in remote rural areas, IECD centers are not in a position to provide stimulating, loving and warm learning environments for children in their care. Thus there is a need to evaluate and monitor how IECD programs are promoting rather than stifling or retarding children's growth and development.

ECD continues to be fragmented, operating under multiple auspices such as the Ministry of Education, NGOs, churches, private individuals and municipalities. The financial positions of such centers will therefore vary based on their support base. The centers also compete with each other to attract customers who are to use their service and therefore will not easily share

resources and human capital, resulting in inadequate communication and collaboration among the centers. Haihambo et al. (2006, p. 85) also show that many caregivers maintain limited contact with others in the neighborhood, limiting opportunities to learn from one another, in the process depriving children of getting the best service, learning opportunities and socialization experiences. There are cases where a lack of sharing the know-how of how to organize the activities of the center successfully appears to be intentional and based on a competitive spirit. Haihambo (2006, p. 85) also explains that cooperation between IECD caregivers and parents are at times hampered by the fact that many poor parents do not have the means to pay their children's fees and therefore would prefer not to see or interact with the care-givers who very often will remind them that they have outstanding fees that need to be settled. Such monthly contributions by the parents are used for running the center activities and paying the care-givers' salary and therefore it is crucial that such an income be forthcoming. At times centers will close temporarily as caregivers have to find other means of income for themselves. Some parents even wrongly believe that caregivers are paid by government and are just greedy to expect payment or a financial contribution. However, in a large number of cases, some community members speak with pride and respect of the caregivers, the NGOs involvement, community involvement and participation and support from international development organizations, as well as individual donors internationally, nationally and locally.

Whatever the preschool model in use at the various preschool establishments in the country, the ultimate goal for the parents is to prepare children for success in school. Awareness among parents about the usefulness of ECD centers in preparing the child for school is picking up momentum and the debate is ongoing among the populace so as to bring this function to the Ministry of Education.

2.5.2 General education

At independence, basic education in Namibia and hence literacy learning came to be considered not only as the process of individuals learning skills of reading and writing and arithmetic, but as a fundamental human right, a contribution to the liberation of man and his full development. This view came to reshape the ideology of basic education in Namibia; hence literacy learning as it is linked to schooling was no longer only a personal goal for the individual citizens, institutionally it became a basic human right for all children (Cook-Gumperz, 1986). Such provision was

accompanied by a pedagogy that stressed improvement of life chances through school learning, and Namibia's envisioned entry into an industrialized society by 2030.

2.5.2.1 Constitutional provision

The Constituent Assembly of Namibia accepted that education is a basic right. With respect to basic education, Article 20 of the Namibian constitution provides that all persons shall have the right to education. In implementing the tenets of Education for All (after participating in the 1990 World Conference on Education for All in Jomtien, Thailand) the Ministry of Education adopted four principles that were to guide education provision, namely access, equity, quality and democracy. The Ministry of Education gave more attention to basic education. Primary education was made free and compulsory and a right for every child and the State had to provide the infrastructure and teaching and learning resources to render effective this right for every resident within Namibia, by establishing and maintaining State schools at which primary education would be provided free of charge. It is compulsory for all Namibian children to complete Grades 1 to 7, or reach the age of 16 while in school.

Since independence the focus of the Namibian government has been on investing in education as it is considered the only mechanism to address poverty and to bring about economic prosperity in the country. In contrast with this view, in the research literature, as much as education is recognized as a tool for socio-economic development, education has also been closely associated with grouping people into economic classes, creating a dominant group and a subordinate group among the country's citizenry. For example, Bourdieu, 1991; Tollefson, 1991; Heller, 2007; Gee, 2008; Blommaert, 2003, 2010; Mutasa, 2006; Prinsloo and Stein, 2004 (among many others) have argued that education's primary role is to allocate social position in unequal societies and legitimize social inequalities. Indeed, Namibia over time, with educational control under successive regimes, has developed as a society with three distinct class groups that roughly coincide with the race categories, Whites, Coloreds and Blacks. Whites generally have the highest social standing, along with Black elite that was empowered through political change following independence. The second social class consists of educated Colored and Black professionals, while the majority of Blacks are at the bottom of the social class pyramid (Jauch, Edwards, & Cupido, 2009).

The new middle classes, consisting predominantly of Black professionals and politicians who benefited most directly from the post-independence changes, started to send their children to the former White schools that are now under the Ministry of Education, or to schools that are private and expensive, better resourced and have a good supply of materials and equipment for their children's learning. On the other hand, the majority of the Black rural population, vulnerable workers and informal economy workers continue to send their children to schools that are worse-off. The schools attended by the latter group face many problems such as overcrowding, poorly qualified teachers, dilapidated infrastructure, poorly equipped laboratories and libraries, etc. – the list is endless – yet all the children have to compete equally for sponsorships and scholarships to attend foreign and local universities upon completion of their secondary education (Namibia Office of the President, 2004; Wikan et al., 2007).

That education will address key social injustices in Namibian society remains an unattained dream on the part of policy-makers, as education as a state institution has thus far been used to control access to the labor market and to reproduce these unequal social cleavages of race and class.

2.5.3 Language in the education policy

2.5.3.1 Namibian languages

Namibia's people speak a variety of languages. Over 11 recognized languages are indigenous to Namibia. In public life, most Namibians are multilingual. Some children are exposed to two or more languages from early childhood, and know two languages equally well. By way of comparison, in the case of Zambia, as in many other SADAC regions, Serpell (2014, p. 75) notes that the acquisition of a second or third language is regarded as normal. He points out that adults who are resident in urban areas typically claim fluency in three or more languages, while those in rural areas in two or more.

In Namibia, all languages (more than eleven) and their dialects coexist and are used as resources for communication. A home language, a local language or English is the medium of instruction in Grades 1-3. Williams (2004) notes that it is commonplace for sociolinguistics that a language label such as 'Oshiwambo', 'Khoekhoegowab' etc. may encompass different variety of dialects and that 'mother-tongue' education is therefore not assured simply because the same label is

attached to the language of the learners and the language of instruction. Even then, as Serpell (2014) points out, learning a new dialect of a language one already knows is easier than learning a new language. He argues that if initial literacy is to be taught effectively to children enrolled in multilingual, multidialectal classrooms, it seems essential to respect their prevailing patterns of communication as 'available semiotic resources' that must gain acceptance in the mainstream of educational practice (Serpell, 2014, p. 92).

The current distribution of languages in Namibia based on the Namibia 2011 Population and Housing Census, shows that Oshiwambo languages were reported in almost half of all Namibian households (48.9%). The other main languages reported were Nama/Damara (11%), Afrikaans (10%) and Otjiherero and Kavango languages (both 9%), with the Asian languages only spoken in 0.1% of all households. Other unspecified African languages are used in 1.3% of the households (p. 68).

Based on language families of the world (Katzner, 1977) languages that are spoken in Namibia can be grouped into three larger categories with an addition of the Namibian sign language:

a) Niger-Congo languages: This family of languages is the largest in Africa (Katzner, 1977, p. 29) and includes the Bantu languages as a sub-category. Niger-Congo languages extend from Senegal, in westernmost Africa, across the 'hump' to Nigeria, and then down the southern half of the continent as far as South Africa. Maho (1998, p. 57) points out that the Bantu languages are classified as a subgroup of Southern Bantoid and that in Namibia five different groups of Bantu-speaking peoples are generally recognized: the Ovambos, the Ovaherero, the Kavangos, the Caprivians and the Batswana.

Bantu languages: Amongst these, languages/dialects of the Oshiwambo grouping are spoken at home by 48.9% of Namibia's population. This is a group of more or less mutually intelligible languages, originally from North-Central Namibia and Southern Angola. Only OshiNdonga, OshiKwanyama, Oshikwambi have been reduced to writing or codified, predominantly by missionaries (Maho, 1998, p. 31).

Languages/dialects of the Rukavango language group are spoken at home by 8.5 % of the population, mainly in the north-east. Maho (1998, p. 37) points out that the Kavangos are customarily regarded as comprising five groups of Bantu-speaking peoples, namely the Vakwangali, the Vambundza, the Vashambyu, the Vagciriku and the Hambukushu.

Languages/dialects of the OtjiHerero group are spoken by 8.6% of Namibia's population, mainly in north-western Namibia, east and north-east, and also in Botswana.

The Caprivi languages group includes language/dialects spoken by 4.8% of Namibia's population, mainly in the eastern Caprivi. Maho (1998, p. 47) recognizes six major Bantu languages here, namely Cisubiya, Chifwe, Shiyeyi, Chitotela, Mbalangwe and Silozi. She points out that of these, only Silozi, Cisubiya and to some extent Shiyeyi have been linguistically described at all.

SeTswana language/dialects are spoken at home by 0.3% of Namibia's population and SeTswana is also spoken in Botswana and South Africa.

b) Khoisan languages: Katzner (1977: 33) indicates that the name Khoisan is composed of the word "Khoi," the Hottentot word for Hottentot, and "San," the Hottentot word for Bushman. He explains that the most distinctive feature of the Khoisan languages is the presence of the click consonants, made by drawing air into the mouth and clicking the tongue (p. 33). In Namibia they are linguistically divided into Khoekhoegowab, a language with well-established orthography and spoken by a large segment of the population, and the Bushman languages, many without formal orthographies, some endangered or near extinction, all spoken by relatively small segments of the population and insufficiently known outside their own communities.

Khoekhoegowab languages are spoken at home by 11.3% of Namibia's population. These languages/dialects include Nama, Damara, Damara/Nama, Heikum and Topnaar.

San languages are spoken by 0.8% of the Namibian population. These languages are !Kung (Ju'/hoan, !'O-!Khung, !Xung, #Kx'au//ein) spoken mainly in northeastern Namibia and adjacent Botswana; Kxoe spoken mainly in the West Caprivi; and Naro spoken in central eastern Namibia and adjacent areas of Botswana, and Naro, !Xóö being in danger of becoming culturally extinct.

c) Indo-European languages: Katzner (1977, p. 10) states that this family of languages is the world's largest, embracing most of the languages of Europe, America and much of Asia. They include over 400 languages mainly from Europe, the Middle East and India. English is spoken at home by 3.4% of Namibia's population, Afrikaans by 10.4% of the population, and German by 0.9% of the population.

A problem with national census data regarding language information stems from the census question: What language do you speak at home? This question assumes monolingualism as the norm, whereas a lot of people in Africa grow up multilingual from childhood. Thus the response to this question does not always reflect the actual language practices in the household and fails to tap the multiple language practices that are common in Namibia in particular and in Africa in general.

d) Namibian Sign Language: Namibian sign language is the first language and medium of instruction for deaf learners. Deaf learners will learn Namibian Sign Language and use English for writing (Namibia, 2010, p. 32).

2.5.3.2 Language in the education policy

According to Spolsky (2004, pp. 46-47), schools take over from home the task of socialization and development of language competence of young children. Most commonly, children learn one or more of the local vernacular varieties or dialects at home, but at school are expected to master a selected official language of the country. Children coming to a particular school are likely to speak different dialects or languages. The school on the other hand selects a single language in its standardized form as its desired goal or medium of instruction.

Language played a significant role throughout Namibia's colonial past. Language issues were used for political gain, control and oppression by perpetrators across the political spectrum at different times in the Namibian history and 'language legitimating' (Bourdieu, 1991) took place through the institutions of the state, especially through education. As Bourdieu points out, it is 'through a complex historical process, sometimes involving extensive conflict (especially in colonial contexts such as Namibia), that a particular language or set of linguistic practices has emerged as the dominant and legitimate language, and other languages or dialects have been eliminated or subordinated to it' (Bourdieu, 1991, p. 5). Namibian leaders had to weigh up the various languages spoken by Namibian nationals in order to decide on the question of dominant and legitimate language/s. In formulating its language policy, the Ministry of Education and Culture was guided by the following complex set of assumptions, principles and values (MEC, 1993, pp. 64-65):

- All national languages are equal regardless of the number of speakers or the level of development of a particular language.
- All language policies must consider the cost of implementation.
- All language policies must regard language as a medium of cultural transmission.
- For pedagogical reasons, it is ideal for children to study through their own language during the early years of schooling when basic skills of reading, writing, and concept formation are developed.
- Proficiency in the official language at the end of the seven-year primary cycle should be sufficient to enable all children to be effective participants in society or to continue their education.
- Language policy should promote national unity.

Until 1990, German and Afrikaans as ex-colonial languages were languages of status, dominant and privileged as official languages, while all the other local languages were marginalized and remained underdeveloped and subordinate to these dominant languages. At independence, English enjoyed government recognition and became the sole legitimate or official language of Namibia to be used for all official purposes of the state, with the rest of the spoken languages recognized as national or local languages (MEC, 1993, Fredericks, 2007, Frydman, 2011). There

are historical reasons why English is the only official language when it is a native language of less than 2 % of the population. During the apartheid era, the designation of a language as belonging to a specific group was a 'cultural right' and it was used to legitimize divisions in the Namibian society and inequalities of power and privilege. Consequently, much of the public would have perceived the demand by any given group in the society for special consideration for a particular language use to be an attempt to perpetuate the power and the privilege of such a group, as was the practice before independence. Many local languages that are spoken by a significant number of people also fell short in printed materials for both instructional and leisure purposes, had limited terminologies in some subject areas and in some cases lacked standardized orthography to use in schools. So, when crafting the language policy there needed to be a fair balance between the abilities of individuals to choose their medium of communication and the public interest in a common language of national unity, to facilitate citizens' participation and decision-making in a democratic society.

Therefore, the language policy in education came about as a compromise. English was considered by the emerging political elite as a unifying and neutral resource, in contrast with Afrikaans or German, and therefore it took on a special place and function in education in Namibia. English came to be considered the language of international connectivity, and not as a source of foreign cultural domination (Banda et al. 2012, MEC, 1993). It is important to note that English as it is used in Namibia, is considered to be evolving. Like all language, it changes as people use it. Beyond that, regionally specific variants of English have emerged. People in Australia, Canada and the United States are all proud of their national language which they continue to call English even though it has diverged in important ways from what is heard in parts of England, similar to the diversity of language within the United Kingdom (MEC, 1993, pp. 64 – 65; MEC, 1992, pp. 16-22, 35- 38).

2.5.3.2.1 Comments on the assumptions that guided the language in the education policy

To argue that all languages are equal is political rhetoric or claims made by linguists, that don't explain sociolinguistic realities. Despite trying to argue for equality of all national languages and the upholding of a multilingual policy, the English-dominant policy thus leads to a situation that favors the reproduction of English language hegemony, as was the experience in Tanzania, Singapore and elsewhere (Blommaert, 2003, 2010; Stroud & Wee, 2012). That English is allocated far greater value than the indigenous languages can be noted from the language policy

options that are dominant in primary schools which promote early exit from indigenous languages as medium of instruction, and into English, which is the sole official language of Namibia. Meanwhile, English in Namibia is evolving to give rise to a specific variant that can be called 'our own', namely Namlish. Pennycook (1998, p. 140) points out that this is possible as English has the propensity for acquiring new identities and ranges of varieties. Crystal (2000, p. 9), in support of 'Namlish' as one of the English varieties becoming formalized and given a language status in future, argues that although at present Singaporean, Ghanaian, Caribbean and other 'New Englishes' continue to be seen as 'varieties of English', it is certainly possible for local sociopolitical movements to emerge, which would 'upgrade' them to language status in due course.

2.5.3.2.2 Implementation of the language in education policy

2.5.3.2.2.1 Transitional bilingualism

In Namibia, transitional bilingualism is the practice of using the mother tongue as a medium of instruction for the first three years of primary education, before a complete change over to English as the medium of instruction from Grade 4 onwards, while the mother tongue may continue to be taken as a subject from Grade 4 onward or may be discontinued. The model proposes mother tongue as the medium of instruction alongside the teaching of English as a subject. This practice allows for initial literacy teaching to be conducted as far as possible in the language or variety that the children brought with them from home (Spolsky, 2004, p. 47).

Even if the proponents of transitional bilingualism aim to promote local languages as much as possible in the early grades in comparison with English, the advocates of bilingual education have argued strongly against quick-exit transitional programs as being inferior to programs that attempt to develop bilingualism and biliteracy, which involve far greater amounts of mother tongue instruction than the transitional programs (Cummins, 2000, p. 169). The aim of the transition, as explained in Baker (2003, p. 199), is to increase the use of English in the classroom while proportionately decreasing the use of the mother tongue in the classroom. For this to succeed, the teachers at these levels need to be bilingual in order to promote the transition from mother tongue to English, but this has always remained a grey area in Namibia. A transfer view argues for initial mastery of literacy in the mother tongue (first/primary language) so that the cognitive skills and strategies needed for reading and writing can be fully developed

(McLaughlin, 1985; Cummins, 2000). Once well developed, these literacy skills and strategies transfer easily and readily to the second language (English) (Baker, 2003). Should this not be the case, the proponents of the "linguistic interdependence hypothesis" may argue that failure to master literacy skills after initial preparatory literacy exposure in primary language has been acquired, is as a result of poor teaching that causes learners to not develop basic interpersonal communication skills in English as well as cognitive academic language skills needed to deal with difficult concepts and literacy in an academic setting.

According to Baker (2003), Fleisch (2008) and Veii (2003), in a subtractive environment the transfer of literacy skills between the two languages may be impeded if the child's oral skills in English are insufficiently developed for such literacy acquisition to occur. The main concern with the transitional model is that children who do not speak English may be seriously disadvantaged when they enter the upper primary school phase by having to compete with other learners who chose a 'straight to English' language policy from preschool.

2.5.3.2.2.2 Immersion approach

An immersion approach, or a 'straight to English' approach comes about when children in a given school, especially in urban and peri-urban areas, may speak several Namibian or varieties; or other international languages for which the school may not have teachers or when the school decides that English is the language of teaching and learning. In the Namibian context, children in immersion programs may be from home language backgrounds that are not English or from a home background or a cultural background where reading and writing are not part of their cultural practices. Thus the children would require their teachers to take their peculiar context into consideration as they develop their social and personal identities about who they are as readers, writers, and thinkers. Gee and Hayes (2011, p. 16) for example caution that:

> Children from homes that do not enculturate them early into some version of literate culture (and a version that ensures they do well at school, given how schools actually function) come to school in need of more practice and immersion in literacy activities than the school usually has the time or will to provide.

Gee and Hayes (2011, p. 17) further argue that such children typically are taught the literacy skills directly through drill and rote learning. They pointed out that this approach is not optimal for helping children to form a deep affiliation with literacy as an 'identity' (i.e. being a literate person, lifelong reader, committed writer, etc.) though it sometimes succeeds in preparing children to pass tests.

2.5.3.2.3 Comments on the implementation of language in the education policy

According to the language policy, on the one hand we have a situation where the learners will make an early exit from their mother tongue, and, on the other we have a situation that promotes English upon entry into schools. This arrangement speaks volumes about the relative value of local languages in comparison to English, which is the dominant language. I contend that a language in education policy that does not favor the promotion of indigenous languages will fail to use the language and literacy resources that children bring with them to school as a base from which these children can take on school-based identities and social languages. Furthermore, a policy that favors the immersion approach (or 'straight for English'), which is a 'foreign' language to the majority of Namibian children, causes the children to disdain and disown their own indigenous languages.

The education system is the state agent that reproduces the regime of language which selects to include some of the languages and exclude others, decides when to exit the indigenous languages as a medium of instruction and restricts them to a 'subject-status' after their exit as medium of instruction, while generalizing English as the dominant language at almost all levels of society (MEC, 1993). From the upper primary to higher education phase, English is used as the medium of instruction. Namibia is therefore characterized by an unequal pattern of distribution of linguistic resources among its populace, with English as the ticket to further education and elitism (Banda et al. 2012). English is spoken 'well' by a very small elite, in contrast to the general inhabitants. In this way, language becomes a powerful mechanism for social stratification. The elite thus secure their interests and create a clear divide between themselves and ordinary people (Frydman, 2011, Brock-Utne, 1993).

Mostly, the functions of the indigenous languages are confined and local. As soon as they get circulated trans-locally; they lose function and are overtaken by English. Blommaert (2003, p. 1)

who researched the regime of language in Tanzania (East Africa), argues that languages in themselves are not agents of inequality, but it is the way we distribute them nationally and in relation to transnational hierarchies that is the key to understanding inequality. Blommaert's (2010, p. 46) argument for Tanzania in this case also holds for Namibia in the sense that the choice of English, as per the policy, rather than indigenous languages in education, 'allows you to "get out of here" and towards particular centers – metropolitan areas – where upward social mobility at least looks possible'. He further argues that 'moving through the various levels of education often involves moving through layered, scaled regimes of language, each time seen as enabling de-territorialization and hence social as well as geographical mobility'. Blommaert (2010, p. 194) states that the language in the education policy governs the value of the linguistic resources: 'It governs what people can do with them and what they do to the people'. He observes that such linguistic principles connecting language varieties to dynamics of locality and mobility often foster resistance to the promotion of indigenous, minority languages (p. 46).

2.5.4 Pedagogical philosophies and practices in literacy education

Hall et al. (2003, p. 322) explain that effective literacy teaching in the early years of school is about far more than 'method'. Rather it is a complex mix of philosophy, method, teacher development and school culture. The educational reform process in Namibia required teachers and learners to accept a theoretical shift. The dawn of the learner-centered approach in an independent Namibia has to be understood as stemming from radical dissatisfaction with a colonial education system that overwhelmingly used the traditional subject-centered, teacher-directed approach in teaching in schools that was used during the colonial era. The Ministry of Education and Culture (1993, p. 119) argued that:

> Currently, teaching methods in our schools tend to foster memorization and rote repetition. But to address the problems we face and to lay the foundation for a self-reliant and prosperous Namibia we need our young people to go beyond relying on what they have read or been told. … Our children need to learn to think independently and critically. They must master strategies for identifying, analyzing, and solving problems.

This reveals the theoretical shift from the traditional subject-centered and teacher-directed education to the current learner-centered education. The Ministry of Education and Culture

(Namibia, 1993, p. 120) advocates a learner-centered paradigm that aims for a general reorientation of the organization of school work, with the view to foster the acquisition of basic knowledge and skills by all pupils. It is this new theoretical paradigm that is used as a vehicle for a teacher to use, based on detailed understanding of how children develop as reader and writers (Flynn, 2007) that is currently impacting practice. Van Harmelen (1998, p. 8) points out that whether or not learner-centered education will transform education depends, firstly, on whether educators accept social constructivism as a worthwhile and appropriate theory and secondly, on the extent to which educators are prepared to change their practice, not as another set of myths but as part of a continuing critical discourse. Another pedagogical practice that seems to rehash the child-centered learning pedagogy, is the 'transformative pedagogy' which was put forward by Millard (2006), draws on what children bring with them to school from their experience of globalized, multimodal literacy encounters outside the classroom. She calls on teachers to draw what have variously been called their cultural capital, funds of knowledge or literacy assets into the established teaching and learning patterns of schooling (p. 234). She further calls on teachers to create a 'literacy of fusion' which is characterized by the blending of aspects of school requirements with children's current interests (p. 238). She points that effective fusion relies heavily on a teacher's attentiveness to the interests and skills brought into the classroom and their ability to help children to transform what they already know into material that will give them greater agency in a wider world. She argues that teachers also need to encourage children to be more critical of their own and others' meanings (p. 250).

2.6 Research on Namibian children's literacy development

Only a few studies have been undertaken in Namibia on literacy in general. According to Mbenzi (1997), a socio-economic background plays a key role in children's success in learning to read. He maintains that many parents are illiterate and cannot render assistance in literacy learning. Poverty has also been pointed to as a stumbling block, as poor parents cannot afford to buy books to share with their children. He further claims that the policy of automatic promotion contributes to poor literacy at Grade 5 level as learners who benefit from automatic promotion make serious reading errors. He also singles out the great preference for English above mother tongue among many parents, which adds to the problem of pupils reaching higher Grades without being able to read and write. Sinalumbu (2002) cites overcrowded classrooms that do not

allow for individual assistance and automatic promotion even if basic competencies are not mastered, poor teaching, primary language interference and lack of parental support in learning to read and write as factors contributing to poor literacy attainments in Namibia. Kuutondokwa (2003) documents the lack of reading materials at home and at school, illiterate parents, lack of assistance from teachers, improper motivation to read, lack of printed materials in local languages, automatic promotion, poor teaching and poor teacher training programs as aspects that warrant attention if Namibia is to improve literacy development among school-going learners. Nepando (2003) cites poor pre-school services, poor teacher training and preparations, poor learner motivation, reading anxiety resulting from labeling, grouping, humiliations and unfair treatment of poor readers and writers resulting in emotional block, lack of support services to help teachers and parents with children who find it difficult to master literacy skills, overcrowded classrooms with no room for individual attention and insufficient teaching and learning materials as affecting literacy development among children.

Veii (2003), in his longitudinal study on 'Cognitive and linguistic predictors of literacy in Namibian Herero-English bilingual school children', investigated the underlying cognitive and linguistic processing skills involved in the development of literacy in Namibian bilingual school children and examined the cognitive and linguistic factors that may lead to literacy difficulties in this population. Veii points out that there is a need to distinguish between a bilingual child who experiences literacy problems due to deficits in cognitive or linguistic processes (such as dyslexia, attention dysfunction, ineffective decoding, inflexible reading style, poor phonological awareness) and a bilingual child who experiences literacy problems as a result of factors such as inadequate or inappropriate literacy instruction, insufficient educational opportunities, lack of access to literacy materials, lack of literacy support in the home environment, and the mere lack of knowledge of the second language in which the child has to learn at school (2003, p. 203). Veii argues that in a multilingual educational context, especially where children have to learn in a second language, educators are confronted with the difficulty of differentiating between constitutional (problems that are within the child and having to do with the central nervous system dysfunction) literacy problems and transitory (lasting only for a short time) literacy problems related to lack of knowledge of the second language.

Research results from a survey conducted by the Southern African Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality (SACMEQ) on the conditions of schooling and the quality of primary education in Namibia, show that little success has been achieved in improving the quality of education, especially at primary level. This survey included several countries, among them Zanzibar, Namibia, Lesotho, Botswana, Zambia, Malawi, Mozambique, South Africa and others. The SACMEQ (2004) report points out that the academic results at primary level are very poor across the board. It shows that at national level only 22.7 % of learners reached the minimum level (learner will barely survive the next year of schooling) of mastery in reading literacy and a meager 7.8 % reached the desirable level (likelihood to survive the next year of schooling) of mastery in 1995 in comparison to the 2000 figures, which shows a further decline in the percentages of learners reaching both the minimum and the desirable levels of achievement, these being 16.9 % and 6.7 % respectively.

It was also found that the reading competence of learners from low socio-economic groups were much lower than that of learners from high socio-economic groups. In 1995, 11.1 % of learners from low socio-economic level reached a minimum level of mastery, while 34.1 % of learners from high socio-economic level reached a minimum level of mastery. The desirable level of mastery for the same year was 1.2 % and 14.2 % respectively. For 2000, 5.9 % of learners from low socio-economic level reached the minimum level of mastery while 31.9 % of learners from high socio-economic level reached minimum level of mastery. The desirable level of mastery for the same year was 0.8 % and 14.9 % respectively (SACMEQ, 2004, p. 152).

This is indeed a worrisome situation, indicating that the commendable expansion of the provision of access to primary education that Namibia has achieved since independence has not been accompanied by a corresponding improvement in the quality of learning outcomes. The mass schooling in Namibia has not yielded the required results as schools are failing to achieve the required literacy competencies. Schools therefore are producing ‘illiterates’ contrary to their mandate to produce literate individuals. Thus literacy has to become the essential first step of proper schooling in the Namibian context. The ETSIP (2007) program points to Early Childhood Development and pre-primary education interventions as crucial in playing a central role in the overall development of children and their chances of future success in school.

Marope (2005, p. 27) points out serious problems with regard to literacy levels and language learning in Namibia. Marope found that shortage of textbooks and instructional materials persist especially in primary schools. Other than textbook shortage, Marope sees schools as characterized by inadequate instructional materials such as student workbooks, teaching aids, and enrichment materials. Such materials may be denied to the learners at the end of the year to be used by new learners and thus denies learners from homes where print materials are rare; potential reading materials at home are in the form of these old textbooks. The study also claims that practicing teachers have poor reading and grammar skills, elicitation techniques, limited vocabulary, and facility to adequately explain concepts (Marope, 2005, p. 29). Marope claims that teacher's poor English proficiency adversely affects instruction, not only in English as a subject, but in all other subjects that are taught in English, which is a medium of instruction from Grade 4 onwards (Marope, 2005, p, 27).

Namibia has 13 languages of instruction for Grades 1 to 3. The writing of some of these languages is still evolving. Standardization of orthographies and the production of materials are recent phenomena that teachers are still coming to grips with. Because of teachers' language limitations, reading and writing lessons tend to be mechanized verbalization of words, without children grasping the meaning or context, along with mechanical copying of words. Given teachers' own challenges, they have little facility to identify, assess and intervene to help learners with reading and writing difficulties and less still to institute appropriate remedial action (Marope, 2005, p. 29).

In their comparative study of reading habits and attitudes among Grade 6 learners, Wikan et al. (2007) gave specific attention to the availability of reading materials in the home, as one aspect that may indicate socio-economic status and thus have an influence on the reading of learners. They found that substantially more learners from homes with a lack of reading materials did not read to improve their homework and also did not spend time on reading for enjoyment, as opposed to those with sufficient and ample reading materials available. Similarly, more of these learners never borrowed books from the library and they generally did not prefer to read novels. Learners with limited access to reading materials more often considered themselves to be poor readers. It was also found that several of these learners were interested to become better readers

and also wanted more opportunities to read. Another important finding was that with an increase in the telling of stories by parents during the early years, there was also an increase in the enjoyment of reading at a later stage in life. The telling of stories by parents is said to have a very positive influence on the attitudes that learners have towards reading. This study pointed out some importance of a previously less systematized knowledge base (storytelling) existing in an oral and pluralistic traditional community that had a positive impact on later reading development. It is such a knowledge base that is essential and such story-telling sessions and the content of such stories that ought to form our pluralistic conception of literacy as part of the schooled literacy curriculum. Hence, the school system should allow for flexibility for schools to build on their learners' local cultural knowledge base when teaching early literacy.

2.7 Literacy teaching challenges in lower primary schools in Namibia

The research reviewed above points to many factors that could negatively influence meaningful development of literacy learning in the lower primary phase in Namibia. The schools that teach learners from poor Black backgrounds are faced with challenges. Many learners live in dwellings without electricity and do not have a specific room or desk that can be used for study or to do homework. In addition, some learners find it very difficult to keep up with school expectations, as at home they are expected to do household chores that might take up most of the daytime hours after school. Such chores can include the selling of bread on the street, selling in *cuca*-shops (a small shop at a house in a residential area that sells everyday essential items to residents in that neighborhood), herding animals after school and many more such duties. Wikan et al. (2007, pp. 6-7) point out that many lower primary classes in peri-urban and urban areas contain learners who have different home languages and only one of these can be the medium of instruction as per the policy directive from the Ministry of Education. These language differences obviously complicate the task of educators, especially in the first three Grades.

According to Kruger and Siririka (2007, p. 4), the lower primary curriculum is fragmented and overloaded with eight subject syllabuses in Grade 1, increasing to 11 in Grade 4 and consequently they are of the opinion that not enough time is allocated to language teaching. The materials and text books had to be translated and adapted in the other 12 languages within the system, which is not only deemed by the Ministry of Education to be very costly, but also time-

consuming and occurring in conditions where necessary expertise is lacking. Many education language policy implementers in multilingual settings opted for English as medium of instruction rather than through the mother tongue, as a way to accommodate all the learners. The non-English teachers (those who are not English language native speakers) are expected to teach through the medium of English. Many of these teachers have a problem as English is not their home language. Some teachers were trained in Afrikaans as the dominant language under South African rule. Therefore, they have very little command of the English language, which is specified as the language of instruction. The children are also not English home-language speakers but speak different local languages. They thus do not have any command of the English language. In such a situation, neither teachers nor the children are proficient in the language that they have to use as medium of instruction. Teaching through various local languages also proves challenging: there are no teacher training courses on offer in local languages, resulting in a shortage of teaching staff for the various local languages; lack of printed materials for both instructional and leisure purposes is a concern; the limited capacity of terminologies in local languages in some subject areas and lack of standardized orthography in some of the African languages, and the perceptions of certain communities of English as being the elitist language are all seen as challenges that in turn leave the policy implementers with the choice of English as medium of instruction (Kruger & Siririka, 2007, pp. 4-5).

Marope (2005, p. 95) remarks that although enrolment and completion rates are relatively high at primary school level, most children leave school without the foundation skill competencies they ought to have acquired in reading and mathematics. In qualitative terms therefore, Namibia is much further from attaining the Millennium Development Goals and the Education for All goals than the statistics tell us. The primary education system continues to add to the current population of people with low functional literacy. Marope also argues that as a result of the scarcity of pre-primary education programs in Namibia, many children start school with literacy knowledge that has only started to emerge and that is not at the expected level required to manage primary school work. By not providing children with the prerequisite readiness, Namibia places the development of its education system on a weak foundation (Marope, 2005, p. 97).

There is, therefore, a need for research to find out why enrolment by quantity seems to be working but that the problems with quality in schooling persist. The Ministry of Education needs to answer the question: Why do many children leave primary school without having acquired the basic literacy skills? To try and answer this question there is a need to find out what is happening during literacy learning at pre- and lower primary phases of education. Is there a need to prioritize and recognize early childhood education and to give it its rightful place for it to play its part meaningfully in our education system? Do early childhood care and development initiatives support what takes place in primary schools?

Marope argues that the national literacy rate is estimated at 82%, yet recent performance on a screening test of the International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS) recorded very low functional literacy, even among grade 10 graduates. It cannot therefore be considered that a pool of labor can be mobilized and trained to apply knowledge and technology to improve productivity, as aspired for in Vision 2030, a policy framework for long-term National Development of Namibia to improve the quality of life of the people of Namibia to the level of their counterparts in the developed world (Marope, 2005, p. 95). The impact and the significance of literacy programs come under question here. Is it just window-dressing or is something tangible coming out of this effort?

This concern relates to the functionality of the adult literacy program in Namibia. Parental involvement and participation in the education of their young children are emphasized by the Ministry of Education as crucial for school success. Parents are seen as important stakeholders in education and as having a role to play and a contribution to make towards the success of their children in school. Parents who do not have formal education or have low functional literacy would be restricted in the quality of assistance they will render to their children pertaining to school-related tasks, as expected from each parent by the Ministry of Education. It is hoped that the national literacy program will increase the national literacy rate and empower parents with literacy skills which they in turn can use with their children during their early literacy learning. The success of this venture is still to materialize before any spill-over effect on early childhood literacy is to be realized.

The Namibian research reviewed here points to insufficient educational opportunities; inappropriate literacy instruction; lack of literacy support in the home environment; and the lack of knowledge of the language of instruction among many children in Namibia. While these studies point out possible causes of problems pertaining to literacy learning and teaching, the current research followed selected cases to study how literacy is constructed and supported during children's early literacy learning. In contrast to the earlier historical presentations that captured the different intention of literacy during the different historical periods, which are all variations of the autonomous model, literacy is a term that applies to a varied and open set of multimodal activities with print and spoken language that is learned in specific cultural contexts as meaningful cultural practices instead of conceiving literacy as 'involvement with written language that is the same everywhere and involves some fixed inventory of capacities' (Searle, 1999, p. 6). It is these contexts and their literacy practices that became the focus of this study. The recognition of these literacy practices across different cultures, in respect of both their content and context, will play a crucial function in democratizing and harmonizing literacy learning in our classrooms of today.

2.8 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have outlined the historical and political background to the study by reflecting on pre- and post-independent Namibia. This historical review covered Pre-colonial education, Missionary education, German colonial education and South African colonial education in Namibia. This was followed by the educational developments in post-independent Namibia that paint a picture of better resourced schools for bourgeois children, while parents with less means send their children to more affordable, less-resourced schools, thus perpetuating inequality. Coupled with economic inequality is the fact that education promotes English as medium of instruction from the upper primary school phase, thus resulting in the indigenous languages not being valued as school languages.

In the following chapter, my own research data proceeds to develop an empirically-based answer to the question from a contemporary perspective, by way of a case-study, ethnographic-style research approach. I describe the methodological framework and the research tools used for the empirical research undertaken that builds on the theoretical resources presented in Chapter 1.

3. CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

I want to start this chapter with a researcher statement covering who I am in relation to the study I have undertaken. I was trained at undergraduate level as a secondary school teacher and started my teaching career in Windhoek, where I taught for seven years. In 1995 I obtained an MPhil in Special Education from the University of Oslo in Norway. The theme of my thesis was: *Reading Difficulties Experienced by Grade 1 Learners in a Primary School in Namibia: A Contextual Study*. I joined the Department of Educational Psychology and Inclusive Education at the University of Namibia in Windhoek as a lecturer, a post which I currently still hold. I took an interest in initial and early literacy learning and how that could help me understand the possible reading difficulties experienced in schools. The topic that I selected for my PhD studies is *What counts as literacy in Windhoek urban pre- and primary schools in Namibia?* This topic remains related to my area of interest, which is early literacy learning. The selected research sites are all suburbs of the city of Windhoek. Apart from being a resident of Windhoek, I had no previous direct connection to the selected pre- and primary schools and the homes of the research participants.

In chapters one and two, I set out the background and the theoretical basis of the research respectively. The viewing of literacy as being part of social practices which are inferred from events and mediated by texts is much broader than the research methods used and covers everything from the first formulation of the research, through to analysis and impact, and including the writing up of research, the present study in conformity opted to call this chapter 'research design and methodology'. My intention to investigate what counts as literacy and how it was supported during its early learning, resulted in the review of literature focusing on literacy learning. I specifically reviewed literature on children's early literacy development, focusing on reading and writing to see how literacy studies and education approached them. These studies pointed out the various aspects of early literacy that was being studied and the approaches that guided them. In deciding which approach fitted this study best, the studies that formed the theoretical background played a decisive role. After a careful review of these methodologies and guided by my focus question, which in turn was rooted in a broader educational concern as to

why so many learners in Namibia cannot read for comprehension in Grade 6, I decided on an ethnographic-style research approach. The SACMEQ II Report (2004), for example, argues that "If more than half of the Grade 6 learners in the three regions (Caprivi, Ohangwena, and Oshikoto) cannot read for comprehension, then there could be a serious problem with either their regional or home circumstances, or the way in which they are taught" (p. 155). This broad unanswered concern shaped the focus of my research, but focusing specifically on Windhoek in the Khomas Region.

I considered the ethnographic-style research paradigm as appropriate to help me focus on my concern, namely a concern within education that focuses on literacy and looking at texts and practices at school and at home, and also to help explain the national key question in education, which points out that so many learners in Namibia cannot read for comprehension in Grade 6. It was particularly important to see how early literacy learning was taking place in the classroom setting and at home in order to identify the literacy identities that were being made available to the learners and to indicate if they could lead to academic success or not. Against this broad background that gave rise to the formulation of my key question, this chapter will also cover the rationale for using ethnography as the appropriate research design, the process of how access to the research subjects setting was obtained and the selection of participants, the tools that were used to collect the research information, the fieldwork procedures, the analysis procedures, ethical considerations and research children's profiles, concluding with the transcription conventions used in data transcripts which I will use in the upcoming chapters.

3.2 Research Design

Before I explain why I followed an ethnographic-style research approach, it is important to explain the concept ethnography and its basic common features and then how the present study, that focused on literacy, used this approach in a more restricted and focused way in order to understand what is going on in particular literacy settings.

Ethnography is an approach to research that falls firmly within the category of qualitative research and ethnographic designs are qualitative procedures of describing, analyzing, and interpreting the research data. As a research tradition, ethnography developed as an approach

within the field of social anthropology and later started to be applied within certain kinds of educational research, including language and literacy research. Creswell (2008, p. 473) explains the term ethnography as literarily meaning 'writing about groups of people'. Ethnography refers to the research of people or cultures or to the study of people as they go about their everyday lives, while ethnographic research, particularly as it has developed in educational studies and in literacy studies, uses the research methods of ethnography to carry out more limited and topic-focused data collection.

Central to the first uses of ethnography was a concern to study culture, and to include attention to human behavior and beliefs, as well as language. Ethnographic descriptions can include attention to language, rituals, economic and political structures, life stages, interactions, and communication styles. Shank (2006, p. 60) points out that in ethnographic research, researchers participate, over an extended period of time, in the lives of the people they are studying to try to see the world from their cultural perspectives and to understand the meanings in their rituals and cultural artifacts and activities. Gay, Mills and Airasian (2009, p. 404) explain ethnography as the study of the cultural patterns and perspectives of participants in their natural settings and ethnographers as engaging in the long-term study of particular phenomena to situate understandings about those phenomena into a meaningful context. However, the term 'culture' has become a highly contested and controversial term within anthropological debates. Ethnographic-style research as applied in this research has a narrower canvas than classical ethnography. It does not aim to illuminate 'the total life of a people' but to get in-depth insight into a particular subject (children's early childhood literacy learning and practices) while drawing on the resources of ethnography to develop an in-depth understanding of the use with regard to a relatively small number of research participants.

When one is doing research that follows a certain design, the study should align itself along key features of the said design. Here I will refer to a few sources that highlight key features of ethnographic studies but will continue to point out that the present study was an ethnographic-style research concerned only with literacy and not all the features highlighted as common to ethnographic studies.

Yin (1993, p. 46) characterizes an ethnographic approach as one in which the investigation seeks to:

> gain a close-up, detailed rendition ('thick description') of the real world; challenge the logical positivist position by claiming that all evidence is relative and therefore cannot be independent of the investigator – thereby favoring participant-observation as a dominant mode of data collection; and permit and even encourage fieldwork to continue for long periods of time and in a reasonably unstructured manner, so that the regularities and rituals of everyday life can surface in a natural fashion

Mukherji and Albon (2010, p. 70) highlight some features that studies deemed as ethnographic have in common:

- There is a focus on a specific location, or setting or event.
- Within this specific location, setting or event, there is a focus on the *full range* of social behavior.
- A range of methods might be employed in order to understand this social behavior from *inside* the location, setting or event.
- Data analysis involves a movement from rich description to identifying concepts and theories that are *grounded in the data*, which is collected in that location, setting or event.
- There is an emphasis on capturing as much detail as possible and in so doing, not shying away from the *complexities* of the issues in the research location, setting or event. This is viewed more important than the ability to make generalizations in ethnographic research.

Barton (2013, p. 1) points out the following:

> Historically, anthropologists carried out long-term intensive studies of a whole culture and then wrote ethnography. Many of the studies of literacy are narrower and more focused, and they can be described as drawing upon ethnographic approaches without being full ethnographies.

The present study, which focuses on children's early literacy, used an ethnographic approach in a restricted and focused way similar to that suggested by Barton, above, or in a kind of a 'micro-ethnography' way. I identified particular configurations of literacy practices and events in different contexts to focus on what counts as literacy in those contexts. Thus, my study is an ethnographic-style research and not a full-blown ethnography. My study was restricted to focusing on observing and recording literacy practices and events in urban settings around Windhoek in Namibia. The study focused on three children as key research participants and studied their early literacy learning and activities in their classrooms and at home, by observing them and recording them during those practices over a year-long period. I collected comprehensive narrative and visual data over the course of this one-year period to gain insights into what counts as literacy in these contexts, and which were different from each other.

During the first phase of the study that lasted for six months, from June to November (preschool phase), each of the three preschools and the homes of my research children were visited once for observation before further data was collected. In preschool and at home such an observation visit lasted from a minimum of 45 minutes to an hour per child at a time. The videotaping sessions for each child occurred during four intermittent sessions. The three participating preschools were visited twice each in October, and twice in November of the same year. Home recording for each child took place intermittently over four sessions within November of the same year. Each of the preschool recordings covered a literacy event and could last about two hours or more, while at home each session was covered in about an hour. The second phase (primary school phase) from January to June started with an observation visit of about an hour for each child. This was followed by four video recordings in school and at home for each child on different days of the week. The recordings of literacy events at school could last from 45 minutes up to an hour for one child at a time per session.

The current study applied a socio-cultural practices lens to access, understand and describe what counts as literacy in Windhoek urban settings of my research children. In answering the question: 'What counts as literacy and how is it supported during its early learning?' the study considered literacies as social practices manifesting in everyday literacy events in which children participated in that setting. Literacy was viewed as being part of the life of my subjects. I entered

selected sites and gathered data by way of recorded observation, field notes and conversation. I visited homes and preschool and lower primary schools to document literacy activities at these sites, with a particular focus on my identified research participants at these sites. The study identified the literacy practices which these children drew upon and participated in at home and in school. I therefore set out to identify situated literacy practices within and across settings, employing what Bloome and Katz (2003, p. 392) refer to as a 'comparative situations theory-building methodology'. The data from multiple locations – the home, preschool and primary school – was compared to generate theoretical constructs about the nature of literacy within and across settings in order to answer what counts as literacy in each of them and how they relate to each other. The study collected detailed data during literacy events within and across these settings over a period of one year in order to identify the nature of literacy activities that children participated in during literacy learning and inferred what the literacy practices were that sustained such events. On the basis of that analysis I determined what counts as literacy in these early childhood settings.

3.3 Sample

I used a 'convenience sampling' approach that fitted the research question and resulted in the identification and selection of three children as the focus of research. Convenience sampling selects research participants because of their availability or easy access. A criticism of convenience sampling sometimes made is that it leads to unrepresentative sampling. However, my research was not aiming at the kind of generalizability that large-scale survey research, in contrast, claims to provide. In addition, my research incorporated attention to a wider canvas than just the selected children in that I studied the broader context of their literacy learning interactions as well, including attention to their teachers and their peers.

The three children selected as key research participants were from the three chosen research sites in Katutura, Khomasdal and in a Windhoek suburb respectively. These sites are predominantly inhabited by people from distinct socio-economic backgrounds, Katutura for the poor, Khomasdal for lower middle-class families and individuals and the Windhoek middle-class suburb for the political and economic urban elite. The pre- and primary school services provided within such settings served predominantly the relevant social classes. The three sites were available in terms of proximity to each other. The children who participated in the study were

between the ages of five and six, i.e. the last year before the child entered formal education (Grade 1). My purpose for selecting these three sites where people from contrasting classes resided was to allow for contrasting accounts of literacy to emerge, so as to document the variations in ways reading and writing and other communicative modalities were taught and learned as forms of socially situated activities. The focus of the study was to understand the literacy practices and events that children participate in by describing and explaining how they were related or different in facilitating children's path into school literacy and other forms of literate practice beyond school.

For each of the selected children, home literacy practices and events constituted part of the study. The role that the parents or other caregivers and siblings of the focal children played at home during home literacy practices was studied in order to document how literacy learning happened at home. The three preschool teachers of the three research children who were assigned to advance their early literacy development, formed part of the study in order to document how their classroom practices were products of particular ideas and values relating to literacy and learning. In addition, based on the declared parental choice of primary school for their preschool children, the primary schools to be attended by these children also became research sites that were later studied in the course of my research. The three research children, their homes and their primary school teachers later continued to be part of the study, providing valuable data during a second phase of data collection. I observed and recorded classroom literacy practices and events in order to document how such practices were products of particular ideas and values relating to literacy and learning.

3.4 Data collection methods

Using ethnographic-style research methods, I typically used a multi-instrument approach or triangulation for data collection in order to get a more complete picture and increase understanding of the phenomenon under investigation, as well as to cross-check the information to ensure trustworthiness or validity of the data. The principle of triangulation, where research on the same topic is collected by way of three-or-so methods (observation, artefact collection, for example), is used to support or moderate emerging research analyses. Triangulation is often recommended for ethnographic-style research, for addressing question of research validity. As

Gay et al. (2009, p. 408) put it, I was the principal instrument who, in collecting data, utilized a variety of techniques over an extended period of time, 'searching' out varying perspectives on what counted as literacy in these natural settings.

The approaches used to gather the research data consisted of direct field observations and taking of pictures, document analysis and videotaping of literacy sessions. Firstly, direct field observation was conducted before any videotaping happened at both school and at home for both Phases 1 and 2 of data collection; the preschool, primary school and home settings involving the participating children were visited once for observation and review of available documents used in those settings during early literacy practice and learning. The observation and document review took a similar focus for all the settings based on an observation guide that was prepared. The observation guide also allowed for the capturing of the uniqueness of each of the settings through descriptive notes in order to illuminate the differences and/or similarities in the various settings where the research children were. The observation checklist which was developed guided the field notes that I took in my role as observer, to capture where the activity occurred, the physical characteristics of the setting, how literacy sessions were conducted, and aspects of the social context including mediation and interactions and classroom and sitting arrangements. Reading support resources and services occurring at home were all recorded and photos taken during the observation visits. My personal style of participant-observation was that I was more observer than participant during most of the classroom sessions.

The data collected during field observation was used to set the scene for the recording of the literacy sessions. The observation data was important as it captured the literacy environments and the literacy events of the participants, who took part in a social activity of a particular kind that takes place in the classroom and at home, leading to the learning of certain behaviors that are identified as literacy learning. The concept behavior connotes that there is an event, a happening that can be observed, in which things are done, performed, negotiated and achieved by the participants and that there is a purpose for such activity, namely, literacy learning, broadly conceived.

My field notes aimed to capture descriptive and reflective notes about what occurred, the physical setting, teaching method, and the nature of participants' interaction with each other and if literacy was a formal event or constructed opportunistically. The field notes were collated and written out to form a comprehensive account of contextual data. Such contextual data revealed the possible resources in the children's environment, the uses or lack thereof which were to be examined after the video recordings that followed the observations and document review were transcribed.

Secondly, document analysis was carried out, including review of progress reports, reading curriculum, reading textbooks, and reading schedule at preschool and at primary school, as well as reading textbooks and printed materials of all types at home. These documents were requested and their presence or lack thereof in these settings recorded in order to catalogue the print material in the environment that constituted the literacy practice. The purpose of requesting such documents was to ascertain if such resources were available and were used, their relevance to the child's setting and the extent to which their practice were products of particular ideas and values relating to literacy and learning. A coding sheet with smaller coding units was prepared to compare the data for the various subjects.

Finally, the literacy events that involved the subjects in the study (parents, pre-school teachers, primary school teachers) were videotaped to capture literacy activities they were engaged in with the target child. Each of the settings was visited four times and on each of the four visits literacy practices and events were videotaped for a whole session, with some sessions lasting up to approximately an hour.

3.5 Fieldwork

The fieldwork was conducted in two phases. The study used an extended data collection period of one year. Since the study followed three children at home, in preschool and up to primary school, the researcher had to take a friendly observer stance. I presented myself neither as an authority figure, nor as a peer, but as a 'quasi-friend' or 'tolerated insider in children's society' as advised by Duke and Mallette (2004, p. 102). Entering the field involved forming a relationship and rapport with those in the settings that were in several respects unfamiliar to me.

3.5.1 Phase 1

The first phase pertained to the preschool phase and looked at children's early literacy practices, focusing on what the emergent uses and meanings of literacy were for them. The study examined these literacy practices with the unit of focus being literacy events that occurred at instructional sites as well as in their homes. Literacy events, understood as any instance of interaction or solitary activity where reading and writing featured, were identified for purposes of bracketing off units of data for focused analysis. In my analysis, I asked what the practices might be that shaped these particular events, and how the various practices linked up or didn't link up, and with what kinds of possible consequences for the children's school learning. Phase 1 included the collection of data at home and at the pre-schools the children attended. In identifying appropriate sites and working with 'gatekeepers' to obtain the necessary permissions the following procedural steps were followed:

3.5.1.1 Procedures

The Khomas (central political region) Education Regional Director Office was phoned for an appointment and a personal visit paid to her office to explain the research project and its objectives. At this meeting, I explained the project, handed over the letter requesting permission to carry out the research project (Appendix 1). After the deliberations, I requested a support letter which I needed to give to the heads of the preschool centers. I then approached the Early Childhood Development Coordinator, an official assigned to oversee the preschools. I handed her the letter of request to conduct my research and provided an explanation regarding the purpose of the study and again asked for a support letter.

The next level was that of the heads of the respective preschool centers. I phoned the principals and/or heads of the preschools for an appointment. During the scheduled visit at each of the participating preschools, I explained the purpose and objectives of my research project and handed over the letter of request asking for permission to undertake the study and requesting a support letter. I requested the principal/ head of each center to introduce the project to his/her members of staff and particularly to the teacher(s) of literacy at the pre-school. After the project was introduced to the relevant teachers, I was given the go-ahead. This was followed by detailed discussions of all pre-arrangements, date of commencement and what the principal/teacher might do to ensure a smooth start for the study. The teachers were asked to identify a participating child

at their school. As a guide to selection, I asked the teachers to identify a child whose parents, in their opinion, would be likely to allow their child to participate in the study.

After the children were identified for selection, I handed a letter to the parents via the principal or head of the center, to obtain their consent for their child's participation and their involvement in the study. The parents were requested to sign and return the consent form which was attached to their consent request letter to the class teacher (Appendix 2). Through signing and returning the form they gave their permission for themselves and their child to take part in the study. The three sets of parents who gave their consent, together with their children, therefore became research participants on the study. After giving their consent, the parents had a brief meeting with me at the pre-school to discuss all pre-arrangements, date of commencement and parent visit schedule and how that was going to be organized.

3.5.1.2 Data collection

Each of the research sites, the preschools and homes of the subjects of the study was visited in order to collect case study data through observations, document study and videotape recordings of what was being done, performed, negotiated and achieved, in the literacy context. Each visit to the research site was always prearranged either telephonically, through a mobile message or via an e-mail message. One observation was undertaken in the classroom of each child identified for study, covering one literacy session.

The purpose of the observation was familiarization, preceding the actual videotaping. As the classroom activities occurred, I took notes, which I collated over time as field notes for analysis purposes. Observation aimed to focused on what reading- and writing-linked activities there were, how these were introduced, how they were framed, who participated, how they linked up to other activities in the classes, and social context including mediations and interactions and recognition of earlier learning, classroom and seating arrangements. In addition, textual data was collected and filed, including progress reports, reading curricula, reading textbooks, reading schedules at pre-schools, samples of tasks the child completed, including the texts they read and wrote, records of texts in the classroom library, and photos of displays of children's work in the classroom. Each participating preschool was visited a further four times during which I

videotaped literacy events in the classrooms and made field notes. The recordings varied in length, depending on the duration of such a session.

Home data for each of the research children was also collected through observations, document study and videotape recording of literacy support initiatives. These enabled the collection of valuable information about the literacy practices within the participating households, in terms of what was being done, performed, negotiated and achieved as a literacy activity or as a precursor to literacy activity, in the family context. Prior to video recording, one observation visit was undertaken to the home of each of the participating children, covering one reading session. In addition, textual data including reading textbooks and printed materials at s at the three homes were recorded and displays of children's work at home (photos) were collected to provide a description of the home literacy context. The children's homes were then visited four times for video recording of the events and the patterns of activity around literacy. Such recordings lasted for the duration of the event, with some events taking longer than others. The videotaped literacy activities in the various settings of which the focus children were a part, were transcribed in their entirety, followed by an interpretative analysis that resulted in selected extracts being used to support the thesis argument.

3.5.1.3 Preliminary data analysis

I began data analysis from the initial interaction with participants and continued that interaction and analysis throughout the study period. Phase 1 data for each of the three research children were combined into case data overviews. These overviews consisted of all the information gathered about each child through the various data collection methods. Such case data overviews were not initially used to come up with any firm conclusions, as such case data were considered to be incomplete without Phase 2 data. The case data overviews were used to provide a view of the preschool literacy context for each of the three participating children. During Phase 1 my analytic concern was to find out what counts as literacy in these early settings in which my research children participated.

3.5.2 Phase 2

Phase 2 continued to collect the data of literacy practices and events that the research children continued to participate in at lower primary school phase, while the focus during Phase 1 was on

the preschool phase of early literacy learning. These two phases stretched over a period of six months each, which together added up to the one-year duration of the fieldwork stage of the study. During Phase 2 of data collection, the lower primary schools where the three research children were enrolled became the locus of study. Since the study aimed to provide an insight into what counts as literacy and how it was supported during early learning, data was collected at the primary school phase to capture the literacy practices and events, i.e. what was being done, performed, negotiated and achieved in the literacy classroom context at primary school level as well as at home.

3.5.2.1 Procedures

Parents were asked to provide the name of the primary school and to give their approval for their child's participation in the study. The parents were asked to sign a consent form indicating their willingness to allow their child to continue participating in the study (Appendix 3). The principals of the schools where the children attended were phoned for an appointment. I visited each of them to explain my research project and the objectives and to answer their questions and address their concerns pertaining to my study. I handed over the letter requesting their permission to undertake the study at their school, together with the parental consent note stating their approval for their child to continue participating in the study. I requested them to provide me with a support letter (Appendix 4). Upon approval by the principal to continue the study at those given schools where the learners were admitted for Grade 1, the principal was requested to introduce me to the staff and the teacher with whom I would be working. I in turn asked the class teachers for their permission and approval to continue my study with my subjects who were now under their care, as well as to obtain the teachers' willingness to participate in the study. Upon obtaining their willingness to participate, I discussed all pre-arrangements, date of commencement and what the principal/teacher had to do to ensure a smooth start of the study. I then explained the process and procedures to the teacher.

3.5.2.2 Data collection

Case study data was collected through observations, textual data collections as well as through literacy event recording. Each visit to the research site was always prearranged either telephonically, through a mobile message. One observation visit was organized to each of the three participating primary schools to observe the literacy events in the research children's respective classrooms. As the literacy session progressed, field notes were taken, reflecting on

how literacy events are the products of particular ideas and values relating to literacy and learning. With the researcher taking on a non-participant stance, the observation focused on how the literacy event was conducted, social context of such interactions, classroom and seating arrangements, and how available teaching and learning resources were put to use to facilitate literacy and learning. In addition, textual data including progress reports, reading curriculum, reading textbooks, reading schedule at primary school, samples of all the tasks the child completed, including the texts they read and wrote, records of texts in the classroom library and displays of children's work in the classroom (photos) were collected to provide a description of the classroom contexts and their instructional foci. Each teacher was visited four times while teaching and on each visit their lessons were videotaped for the duration of such a session.

Home data collection followed a similar pattern, starting with a visit to the family home to observe a literacy event and the patterns of activity around literacy. As the observed event occurred, field notes were taken on what was being done, performed, negotiated and achieved in the home (family) context with no interaction with the parent (s) or the child. The textual data was collected in order to reflect if the home acquired new or additional literacy resources during this second phase. The aim was also to take pictures of new displays of the children's literacy work at home or any environmental changes that might have come in due course. Each family home was visited four times while they were engaged in a literacy event with the research child. On each visit, their literacy events were videotaped.

3.6 Analysis of Data and Reporting Findings

There were three major data sources, namely field notes, textual data and video recordings. After phase two data collection was completed, the direct field observations data that were written in the form of field notes for both phases 1 and 2 preschool, primary school and home settings, and containing descriptive and reflective data covering what was going on in these specific social contexts of literacy learning, were analyzed. A preliminary exploratory analysis was made by reviewing the field notes from observations. Textual data included information about the academic administration of the formal literacy programs that the research children participated in, such as progress reports, reading curriculum, reading textbooks, reading schedule, samples of all the tasks the children completed, including the texts they read and wrote, records of texts in

the classroom library, and displays of children's work in the classroom provided contextual information. Pictures of displays and available resources that were taken added their voice to the contextual information. Both the preschool and primary schools' video-recorded lessons were viewed to transcribe what occurred verbatim and thereafter develop categories that describe the teaching and learning of literacy. Home literacy experiences that were videotaped during the two research phases were transcribed in their entirety.

I read through the data gathered with the aid of all my research instruments, sorting them and organizing them per research child, resulting in three sets of data, one per each child, covering literacy learning in the different social settings. Codes or labels were then used to create patterns and themes to describe the social context of literacy learning. I returned to my research question, which is: *What counts as literacy and how is it supported during early learning?* To answer this question, the patterns and themes in the data that came through the initial data analysis had to be examined in order to explain what I had found in response to my research question. What counted as good data in my research were those that captured the social activity that involved reading and writing as a happening of a social kind, leading to certain behaviors becoming identified as 'literacy learning'. Such data was useful to help answer the research question by grounding my claims in examples of classroom and home literacy practices as they occurred during the pre-school and primary school phases of early literacy development.

Going through the various data, I first described the participants and their settings as revealed by the observations, field notes, artifacts and recordings. I then started to group the rest of the data into categories and themes that I used as basis for structuring my analysis and interpretation. I had to look for descriptions and themes from my data in order to answer my research concern and had to motivate on the basis of my research evidence each of the themes that I selected in order to illuminate my research question. I had to carefully select dialogues or textual data and descriptions of what people said or did to support my claims.

3.7 Ethical considerations

In this section I discuss how I addressed specific ethical issues relating to this study, especially as it involved young children. I needed to be particularly mindful of ethics owing to the age and

vulnerability of children from birth to eight years. In order to maintain the well-being and honor research participants' contribution to the research knowledge, ethical considerations required consent by the participants in the planning, conduct, and reporting of research findings.

When doing research involving human subjects, the University of Cape Town (UCT) expects its students to honor the UCT's relevant Code for Research. In fulfillment of these research ethics, I signed a joint statement with my supervisor to adhere to these research ethics code when conducting my research, and received clearance from the Humanities Faculty Research Ethics Committee for my research to proceed. I dealt with ethical concerns in my research as follows:

1) In the planning of my research, I considered the ethical acceptability and the foreseeable consequences of my research. In carrying out this research, I honored my research subjects in terms of the established ethical practices for academic, ethnographic and educational research, particularly with regard to research involving children. I sought appropriate permissions before entering the research sites, also, caution was taken to minimize disturbance of normal procedures when visiting the research sites. This was one of the conditions under which the permission to conduct the research was granted.

2) For the duration of the research process, no conflicts of interest arose between the researcher and the research participants.

3) The research participants, including the children, willingly volunteered themselves to be part of the study. I shared information with all my research participants about the purpose of the research and ensured that they were clear on what was expected from them, and they freely agreed to participate. I shared this information in English as well as in Afrikaans (where necessary) to make sure that all the participants understood the aims of the study, their involvement and the implications of the study. The research process was carried out only after consent was obtained through a signed consent form from adult participants and all the observations and recordings of data was done with the participants' full consent. I obtained verbal consent from the children for their participation.

4) I fully respected the right of individuals to refuse to participate in the research and to withdraw their participation without prejudice to them at any stage. For example, the first parent from Katutura who was asked if she would be willing to allow herself and her child to participate in the study welcomed the request at first but decided later on not to participate. Her decision not to continue to participate in the study was accepted and another parent was approached.

5) No foreseeable physical, psychological or social harm or suffering occurred during the course of this research. The children's rights were upheld; no coercion of any kind was used with any the participants.

6) I reassured all participants that the information gathered during the study would not be used in any way to harm them and that their identities would be protected.
I assured my participants that the information obtained from them would be handled with care and confidentiality. To protect their identity in line with the ethnographic tradition, participants' names and locations were not used in the study nor shall they be used in any publications that might result from it.

3.8 Generalizing from ethnographic-style research

My research concern was about what counts as literacy and how it is sustained across different socio-cultural contexts during early learning. The study examined the relations among home, pre- and primary school literacy practices. The accounts I offer on what counts as literacy and how such literacy is sustained in the various settings in the Windhoek urban areas are based on the study of a small group of children in order to derive some understanding of how literacy is constructed and sustained in these various social settings. My concern therefore was to document the dynamics of children's literacy learning. Similar dynamics might well occur in other formal pre-school and primary school settings and in homes involving young children from different socio-cultural background, especially due to the fact that in Windhoek, in most classroom settings one would find a heterogeneous group of children who hail from the different 'locations' with their unique contexts.

In keeping with the ethnographic perspective that informs my work, I use concrete local examples in order to provide 'telling cases' of the larger conceptual issues discussed above. Drawing on Mitchell (1984), I make the point that such cases are not intended to be taken as 'representative' in terms of empirical typicality. Rather, they are meant to be 'telling' examples, because they show the way particular constructs materialize in practice. They involve *analytical induction* rather than *enumerative induction.* Mitchell (1984, p. 239) points out that,

> What the anthropologist using a case study to support an argument does is to ask how general principles deriving from some theoretical orientation manifest themselves in some given set of particular circumstances. A good case study, therefore, enables the analyst to establish theoretically valid connections between events and phenomena which previously were ineluctable. From this point of view, the search for a 'typical' case for analytical exposition is likely to be less fruitful than the search for a 'telling' case in which the particular circumstances surrounding a case, serve to make previously obscure theoretical relationships suddenly apparent.

The episodes I present are part of the ordinary everyday flow of classroom activities in my data. I see these episodes as 'telling cases' of the issues regarding literacy learning that the research focused on. The concrete and 'ordinary' character of the examples in Chapter 4 below precisely makes the point that these larger themes can be found in local events and practices. What my research did was to make an argument that has substance and which contributes to our understanding of what counts as literacy, how it is sustained across different settings, while proposing best practices to be incorporated into our literacy practices. The arguments being put forward are of value to the wider language and literacy education of the public.

3.9 The research children and the schools attended

The names of children as well as those of the schools given here have been changed to protect the confidentiality of my sources. The three children were a girl, Tuvii, from a preschool that was part of a primary school that the child proceeded to attend in Katutura suburb, which I will call Wanaheda Pre- and Primary School; one boy, Ruben, who attended a preschool in Khomasdal suburb, which I will call the Ounona preschool but who continued his primary school

in the Windhoek West area, which I will call the Good Hope Primary School; and one boy, Matthias, who attended preschool in Windhoek central area, which I will call the Happy Faces Preschool, before joining a private school in Hochland Park suburb, which I will call St Peter Primary School. In the following paragraphs, I will present each of the research children's profiles, covering their age, their appearance based on my observations, their family background, as well as describe some key features of both their pre-primary and primary school and home contexts.

Tuvii

After I explained the selection criteria which the class teacher had to use in the selection of the research participant, the class teacher at first identified a child of a teacher at the same school as herself. The teacher at first indicated her willingness to participate but later turned down the request when she had to give her consent in writing. Another parent was then approached and she expressed her willingness to participate in the study together with her child. It was then that Tuvii became the focus child at the Wanaheda Pre- and Primary School. The six year-old Black girl lived with both her parents in Katutura, in a single room flat/apartment on the side of the main house. The bathroom and toilet facilities were outside the house. Her father worked at a mine in the south of the country, while the mother worked in a government ministry in Windhoek. Tuvii was the only child in the house. When at preschool, Tuvii was tidily dressed in appropriate clothes in line with prevailing weather conditions, as well as during the afternoons when visited at home.

The Wanaheda Pre- and Primary school is a government public school which enrolls mainly children from low-income groups who reside in Katutura. The school is mainly funded by government. The preschool classroom was big enough to contain the 24 children and their teacher. However, during the primary school year Tuvii joined an overcrowded classroom of 32 learners and one teacher, with hardly any space left for one to move about in class.

Ruben

Ruben was identified at a private preschool in Khomasdal, namely the Ounona Preschool, with the assistance of his class teacher after the selection criteria was explained. The six-year-old Colored boy lived with both parents and had one brother and two older sisters who were still attending school. The family lived in the suburb Dorando Park, which is a middle-class residential area. They lived in a decent, free standing house; with all basic facilities. Ruben appeared appropriately dressed at school as well as at home in line with prevailing weather conditions.

The Ounona Preschool was a private preschool which was considered to be one of the good preschools in the suburb. As a private preschool it charged an expensive fee per month and had to plan fund-raising activities in order to sustain itself, pay its staff members, maintain its infrastructure, pay for municipal services and retain its academic reputation. Private preschools mainly enroll middle-class children but because of their good standing they also attract children from low-income families, including those from the Katutura suburb. The preschool had 22 children and their teacher in the classroom. At primary school, Ruben joined a class of 40 learners and one teacher at a public school, the Good Hope Primary School. The classroom has a restroom (toilet) area at the back, a water tap area with a sink and a storeroom where the teacher kept the teaching and learning materials.

Matthias

Matthias was identified at a private preschool, the Happy Faces Preschool, close to the central business district in Windhoek, with the assistance of the head of the center after the selection criteria was explained. The six-year-old brown in complexion boy, Matthias, lived with both parents and had two older sisters who were attending school. The family lived in the Rocky Crest area, a middle-class residential area that compares well with the Dorando Park suburb. Their house was of a standard size and had all the basic facilities. Matthias was neatly dressed in appropriate clothes in line with prevailing weather conditions during all the visits, as well as during the afternoons when visited at home.

The Happy Faces Preschool was a private preschool which was very well resourced. The classroom where Matthias was placed had two sections; the first room was used for whole group activities and the second room was for formal activities that were done on the tables. The classroom space was big enough to contain the 23 children with their teacher. The second room had three round tables, and an extra desk that was used by two children who could not be accommodated at the tables. The preschool had a library from which teachers borrowed books to use in their classrooms and a store-room containing recycling materials which were often used during creative activities. For his primary school, Matthias joined a class of 16 learners and one teacher at the St Peter Primary School. The classroom was spacious and the front part of the classroom had a mat, on which some group teaching and learning activities took place.

3.10 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have presented the methodological framework and the research tools for the empirical research that I carried out. In line with the NLS, the current study used an ethnography-style approach and methods to access, understand and interpret the context of early literacy learning in the Windhoek urban setting in Namibia. I have provided a detailed account of the ethnographic style data collection process which took place over the course of a year and have highlighted the professional ethical conduct that was observed during this period. This was followed by a presentation of a brief profile of my research children, which also covered a description of their home settings as well as their schools' settings during both preschool and primary school phases. I end this chapter with a figure (Figure 1) depicting the transcription conventions which I adopted and used in my data transcripts and which I use in the upcoming chapters.

1, **2**, etc. = line number

T = teacher

S1, **S2**, **S3** = identified learner

S = unidentified learner

SS = several/all learners at once

T/**SS** = teacher and learners at once

[ ] = enclosed translations

// // = overlapping/simultaneous responses

/. / = short pause

/.. / = long pause

° ° = lower in volume than surrounding talk

( ) = comments about the transcript, including contextual and non-verbal actions, e.g. giggles.

(xxx) = un-interpretable words or phrases/talk too obscure to transcribe.

/:/ = lengthening of a sound

` = low falling tone

´ = rising tone

Becau- = cut-off, interruption of a sound/incomplete or interrupted utterance

He says = emphasis, i.e. stressed word based on pitch change and/or increased volume

***** Conventional punctuation marks are used to mark ends of utterances or sentences, pauses, and breaks, etc.

H = the researcher

M = mother of the research child

C = caregiver who looks after the child or children when parents are at work /not at home.

Figure 1 Transcription conventions adapted from Cadorath and Harris, 1998; Roberts and Sarangi, 2005; Dyson, 1993.

In the following chapter, I will present examples of literacy practices in preschools and at home or in family settings. I will argue that literacy learning is encountered in both these settings, i.e. that literacy learning happens in and out of school and across these sites.

4. CHAPTER FOUR: LITERACY PRACTICES IN PRESCHOOLS AND IN HOME SETTINGS

I will be taking a holistic view on literacy learning in school and at home in order to argue what counts as literacy within these settings, namely Katutura, Khomasdal and Windhoek town. They are inhabited by people predominantly from the working class, middle class and upper class respectively. Schools in these three areas of Windhoek are differently resourced, both in terms of material and human resources, with Katutura as the poorly resourced, Khomasdal better resourced and Windhoek town section as the best-off in terms of resources.

My interest was to see if schools and families situated in these three different locations would be approaching literacy teaching and learning in similar or different ways. I wanted to see if there was a preferred approach to teaching/socializing their learners/children in literacy skills and to document such differences if there were any in these three sites. Such differences in approach, if any, would show similarity and differences in literacy learning in these different sites. Since the context of literacy learning is different in these settings, the content on offer in these classrooms and at home is likely to be different also. The forms textual engagement takes during literacy learning in school and at home is what counts as literacy.

4.1 Literacy learning as a concern of preschool education

This study focuses on early literacy learning at preschool and first grade levels. I will first focus on literacy learning as a concern of preschool education before I move on to primary education. Upon entering a preschool, on a weekday, one quickly notices that the activities at such institutions are organized and scheduled so as to direct the learning process taking place. Instructional activities are taking place in the classrooms, guided by a daily schedule. Among such activities would be literacy learning.

The Ministry of Education provided all three preschools that participated in the study, with and a similar curriculum to be used that sets and spells out the teachers' mandate and the instructional activities they had to engage in with in their learners. The teachers and learners were therefore implementing projects that were not of their own making but controlled at national or state level. The content to be covered was specified and the benchmarks of performance were stipulated. I

contend therefore that the routine daily work of the teachers and learners underlies what counts as literacy learning, and the teacher determines what is to count as literacy through the routine daily work by which literacy learning is shared and regulated as an arena of action.

4.1.1 The preschool curriculum of literacy

From the outset the different children who come to preschools bring with them knowledge based on family literacy practices of whatever kind which they have been engaged in before they enter preschool. Similarly, schools offer 'schooled literacy' through its practices, just as the home offers 'home literacy' practices through what is made available to the children. What counts as literacy – what children take up through guided participation – in literacy learning settings that have the practice as part of its culture, counts as literacy learning. The preschool as an institution of learning offers the learners literacy as a social activity of a particular kind which, among many others, is in use in different communities and in different institutions. I will venture to explain these identities being made available to learners in schools and at home so as to identify their particular strengths and weaknesses by arguing for the best literacy approach in Namibia's particular context.

The preschools participating in this study each had an activity schedule that was broken up into chunks consisting of various activities involving the learners. This schedule centered on the following learning areas: language development, preparatory mathematics, environmental learning, arts, physical development and religious and moral education (Namibia, 2008).

I will here present the schedule or daily routine culture of the Ounona Preschool that *Ruben* attended as an example, in order to put across the argument that literacy learning at school is a situated, organized, controlled and directed activity within the local events of classroom life. Such a typical day at Ruben's school was broken up into chunks consisting of:

Firstly, *warm-up activities*: This included teacher-directed body movement activities such as stretching, bending sideways, backwards and forwards, as well as singing of familiar songs led by the teacher or asking children to suggest some songs they wanted to sing as a way to start the day while waiting for others as they arrived from home.

Secondly, *morning devotion*: The class said a prayer after which the teacher read a short story, mainly religious, from the Bible or another biblical text that was modified with pictorial illustrations. The children would sit on a rug in front of their teacher who would read the text to them, requesting them to be quiet and to focus on the story. Such a story would start off with – Once upon a time … and end with – … they lived happily ever after! The topic was chosen by the teacher who narrated it to the class, with a pause to ask if the meaning of a given word was known, or to clarify an aspect the teacher deemed necessary. Otherwise she would conclude the whole story before asking a few questions based on the story.

Thirdly, *presentation of the topic*: The topic or theme of the week was presented either by the teacher or the teacher asking children what the week's theme was. Such a theme would usually be displayed on a poster on the wall or the bulletin board. If the topic had been introduced before, the teacher asked a few questions as a way to revise and reinforce the content that had been covered. Such content presentation remained teacher-led direct instruction which was characterized by collective rote and chant learning.

Fourthly, *coloring, writing, and drawing*: This language arts activity took place at their tables in groups, with each child doing his/her own work, at the most sharing material resources such as crayons, color pencils, erasers etc. to complete their task, with each child being encouraged to do their own work. The teacher would move about visiting the various stations and emphasizing silence during the activities, assisting those who needed help and assessing the work of those who called on the teacher when finished. A tick or wrong mark would usually be in red, showing success or lack thereof.

Fifthly, *eating and drinking time*: Children brought their own sandwich along from home. Children were encouraged to share with their friends who may not have brought some food with them for a given day.

Finally, *playtime*: This activity was supervised by teachers who were on duty or adult workers at the centers or prefects who were tasked to monitor that no unauthorized persons would enter their premises and to immediately report such uninvited visitors to the teachers. Play usually

becomes something children can engage in to relax following completion of set work, rather than a central learning strategy.

The arena of activities that I have set out above gives character to the institution, a preschool, a social context or a setting with a common culture that directs what goes on in it. These activities that occur on a daily basis are carried out for a certain length of time, with a siren announcing the shift from one activity to the next. It is in such daily interactions of teachers and learners – the struggles, the frustrations, and small triumphs – that literacy is constructed in the classroom (Nolen, 2001). There are times for reading and times for writing, time for eating and play, all constituting the daily routine culture of the school life in which literacies are shared. It is within this framework that children learn about literacy at preschool level. The learners are gradually introduced to a given pattern, a framework within which they have to operate, and a way to conduct oneself. It orients their actions and their behavior. As the learners participate together in the classroom as a social space, they establish and maintain joint attention, pursuing common goals, taking turns, acquiring perspective and following social standards (Raeff, 2006). These ground-rules or norms of participation can be different from those they come to school with from home and from their community. It is these one-size-fits-all ground-rules of what learners are allowed to do and not to do that are availed to the preschoolers, all with their own individual differences in linguistic, social, economic and cultural capital that they bring to school. The teachers and their learners have to engage with the literacy curriculum (the contents that are the object of their transaction) within the framework of a didactic system. In all the classroom literacy events, texts are talked about and as such language facilitates the interactions that take place in the classrooms during literacy learning.

In teaching the learners there are regularly repeated events that I will draw on in order to show how children learn to read and write. Since there are different literacies across different cultures which people make use of in life, it becomes important to ask a few questions as to what happens in the classrooms where literacy learning is taught: Do these repeated literacy events in the literacy learning classrooms accommodate all the learners, are there different opportunities availed to different children with their cultural and linguistic backgrounds to learn differently do the learners' cultural capital and habitus count in these classrooms, is the subject matter relevant

and does it allow the learners to demonstrate knowledgeability, are their participative repertoires and preferred ways of interacting upheld during literacy learning in the classrooms?

The underlying concern is whether or not such pertinent questions do receive the attention of the teachers or, even more so, whether these concerns were at the back of the minds of those who prepared the preschool curriculum. Some of the answers to these key concerns lie in what is taking place in our literacy classrooms. I will now move on to present a few examples from my research data to point out what is happening in early literacy development classrooms in Windhoek urban settings. As a qualitative research, I was faced with large amounts of data that I could not summarize for presentation. I was forced into selecting short, representative extracts to provide the reader with sufficient insights into the data to support my argument. The basis for extract selection is illustrative, and no corpus linguistics tools such as identification of key words in extracts were used with this qualitative analysis.

4.1.2 Literacy learning events in the preschool classrooms

I will present six extracts, two from each child and from the three preschools that are situated far from each other in different socio-economic suburbs. Here I want to point out that none of these three preschools knew that the other two were participating in this study. The extracts will reveal what takes place in different classrooms in situated literacy lessons. Here I am concerned with drawing out the distinctiveness and commonalities across each site, with reference to literacy learning in order to make what counts congruent with what takes place in different preschool classrooms as sites of literacy learning.

I will first present classroom resources that were observed in class, followed by six extracts from my preschool data, two per each preschool, and comment on the nature of learning within them before presenting the home literacy practices in which the preschool learners participated. The telling cases that I will draw on from classrooms and from home literacy contexts will be used to illuminate the nature of these practices, their technological aspects and the kinds of skills that are developed in association with and as a consequence of literacy learning that was shared with them.

Ounona Preschool

The data from document analysis showed that various resources were available for use in the classroom. The classroom had displays such as charts, puppets and other manipulatives available, as well as a reading corner with a bookshelf containing storybooks. Other reading materials such as names, labels, letters, biblical texts, individual words, lists, worksheets, individual sentences and nursery rhyme posters were also available to support literacy learning. Writing materials such as variety of papers, pencils, crayons, chalk, chalkboard and notebooks were available. The preschool had a computer room equipped with computers and keyboards. Other materials such as a tape recorder, dolls, boxes, stickers, scissors, rulers, glue and many more were also available to support literacy activities.

Ounona Preschool: Extract 1

Ruben and the rest of his classmates were being taught individual letter-sound correspondences as requisite knowledge to read and write in English. The learners were taught the sounds of the different letters of the alphabet and how they are spelled. The lesson focused on learning the initial sounds in words presented in context of a chart containing the sound and an example of a word starting with the particular sound.

(The school makes literacy learning available through using the alphabet chart to teach the learners to match the corresponding sounds to their individual graphemes as they learn to read and write).

182 **T:** This is a? (Pointing at alphabet chart).
183 **SS:** a b c (sounding letter names).
184 **T:** Is an alphabet, a-b-c [name].
185 **T:** Is a …?
186 **SS:** Alphabet!

187 **T:** a, b, c (letter name) /.. /. /a/, /b/, /k/, /d/ (sounding while pointing on the chart). a: apple; b: bird; c: clown and d: drum (with learners repeating at once, while alerted to initial sound in each of the words).

188 **T:** On this chart is a big A, the mama, and here is a baby a, of the alphabet. I wonder who remembers the *phonic* your name starts with? Come show me, S1, (her name starts with a M sound).

189 **S1:** (Walking to chart and showing it correctly, followed by others).

190 **S2:** Pointing at K.

191 **S3:** Pointing at C.

192 **S4:** Pointing at A.

194 **S5:** (Her name starting with an S) pointing at Z.

196 **T:** Ha/:/a´!

197 **S5:** Then pointed correctly to **S**.

198 **T:** This alphabet is how we are going to learn to read and write. You must know your alphabet, and that will come in Grade 1. Right! Now I will call out your name and you will come to the table. (xxx).

The above extract demonstrates how the teacher illustrated to the learners that letters represent speech sounds. The learners were taught to discriminate between the sounds of different letters of the alphabet by knowing the individual grapheme-phoneme correspondences. They were taught to identify the visual patterns of the individual letters. The learners were asked to say and point the initial sounds in words (line 187). During this lesson, the teacher emphasized the initial or beginning sounds in words and in their names (line 189 – 194). The learners were exposed to print tracking skills by being taught the letter and the sound they represented. In addition, the learners were expected to recognize and to match uppercase (referred to as 'mama') and lowercase (referred to as 'baby') letters as they learn to read and write (line 188).

The extract also shows how letters knowledge was incorporated into instruction (line 186, 187). In this literacy classroom, the initial sounds in names were first identified and then learners were asked to go to the chart to show the letter for that sound (line 189). Line 198 clearly shows that such literacy skills that the learners were acquiring were the basis for the development of literacy

skills in the later elementary years. The teacher here was giving her learners some understanding about why they are learning, 'the alphabet': '… is how we are going to learn to read and write' (line 198).

The teacher was providing the learners with an opportunity to start taking charge of the reading task. They were afforded an opportunity to engage in literacy activity that taught them how to break down words into their analytic units and to become acquainted with the smallest units by talking about sounds in the context of a word. The letters were written down and the learners were expected to make the sound-symbol relationship. The exercise focused on letter knowledge and early word recognition as essential during beginning reading and writing.

At this school, a small group of learners and their teacher participate in a culturally organized activity with the purpose of developing readers and writers as per the tradition of the school. The extract paints a clear picture that the teacher was the one planning all moves and directing the literacy activities in which the learners were participating, in a kind of expert-novice dyadic relationship. As a class group, the teacher as the expert was not using the learners with their varying literacy experiences as resources to challenge and guide each other as they explored this literacy activity. I argue that if this literacy encounter is evaluated against Rogoff's three planes of focus for sociocultural activity (Rogoff, 1995), the apprenticeship plane falls short at the interpersonal level of participation. On the second plane, which is the guided participation, the face-to-face interaction was predominantly learner-teacher and did not include learner-to-learner engagement. The learners were not given an opportunity to decide or make choices in class as to with whom, where and with what literacy materials and activities they wanted to be involved. Everyone had to do the same lesson. Thus, this classroom interaction, which was teacher-fronted, did not allow for side-by-side joint participation among the learners. On the third plane, participatory appropriation, the learners were prepared as individuals on a personal level to know how to recognize words as a way to learn to read and write. I conclude that the teacher was helping individual learners to know the basic word attack skills to build on them in future as certain kinds of readers and writers.

When the extract is analyzed against Green's (1988) dimensions of literacy, the operational dimension reveals that the teacher presented the information orally and the learners had to recite

and memorize the information that was shared for learning. The medium of instruction was English, which is different from Ruben's home language, Afrikaans. Hence, to become literate in English as a second language was a challenge for Ruben as he had to learn to communicate in English (oral language), and read and write in it (an unfamiliar language). The classroom as a cultural context of literacy was not meaning-focused but remained decontextualized with the content that was covered reduced to non-meaningful bits. The culture that was being learned was different from the one that the child came with from home, which is Afrikaans; he now had to learn English and become competent in it as it had to become his dominant culture.

The preschool child is learning a new language and a new culture. This classroom literacy learning encounter at preschool phase serves as a means of social control because the child is only socialized to participate in the culture (read and write) without taking a critical role in its formation and transformation. Similarly, other studies within the social sciences and humanities took a 'social turn' and started to turn away from focusing on individuals and their private minds and instead started to study literacy learning as a social practice (e.g. Heath, 1982, 1986; Prinsloo & Breier, 1996; Barton, 1994, 2007; Gee, 2008; Scribner & Cole, 1981; Street, 1993; Dyson, 1993; Rogoff, 1990; 1995, Prinsloo & Stein, 2004, Prinsloo & Baynham, 2013).

Ounona Preschool: Extract 2

I turn now to an example of a literacy activity that was bound up with oral language. The teacher and the learners engaged each other dialogically as they co-constructed knowledge. Language use has an important function in literacy learning.

(The teacher is conducting a question and answer activity with her class):

143 **T:** When you look at the moon at night, the shape of the moon looks like a?
144 **SS:** Banana
145 **T:** Ok, and what is the shape of a banana?
146 **S1:** Crescent.
147 **T:** Beautiful **S1**!

148 **T:** It is a...?

149 **SS:** Crescent

150 **T:** It is a…?

151 **SS:** Crescent.

152 **T:** When I take this circle and I cut it into two halves, what will be this half? Who can remember?

153 **SS:** Half–circle.

154 **T:** It is a half circle, what is the other name?

155 **S1:** Crescent.

156 **T:** It is not a crescent, my boy!

157 **S2:** A banana.

158 **T:** Hmmmm …, Not a banana. Come, come… (xxx) What do you think?

159 **T:** A semi-circle.

160 **SS:** (Chorus) Semi-circle.

161 **T:** it is a…?

162 **SS:** Semi-circle.

In this extract, the learners are apprenticed into how one ought to treat what is learned at school. School learning requires learners to remember and appropriately recollect learned information (line 158). Learners were invited to participate in a learning opportunity before and now are expected to show that they can remember the particular "word" that was used in class. Here the teacher was looking for that particular word. This dialogic communication yielded a transaction through linguistic interaction with the whole class. Though the learners explored possible answers (lines 144, 146, 153), the teacher's evaluation of their responses was disapproving as she already had an expected answer (line 159). The teacher used the IRE exchange to repair her learners' disciplinal knowledge rather than allowing the learners to expand on their answers, explore, and test the relevance of other possible answers. In her repair initiation (line 159), the teacher modeled the form that she wanted the answer to take, which was followed by repetition/drilling of the correct answer several times (line 160, 162). The classroom exchange led to a conclusion of what was acceptable knowledge and what counted as correct knowledge. I argue that in this extract, school knowledge was being appropriated (Rogoff, 1995) as capsulated

and detached from children's emergent meaning-making, language and literacy resources. The text that I presented here was produced by talk. The most common type of classroom talk, the IRE (initiation, response and evaluation or feedback), where the teacher asks the learner a question to which he or she has to provide an expected specific answer which he or she had in mind, was upheld. The learners were required to provide the correct answer to the question, which was evaluated by the teacher as correct or wrong or even when correct it was still expanded on to culminate in the answer that the teacher expected. I contend that in as much as IRE has a value as a quick and adaptable framework to use for informal assessments, it may not be ideal as a base of all classroom interaction. Wells and Arauz (2006: 380) suggest that there is a need to treat talk as a site for exploration rather than simply for evaluation, arguing that classrooms can indeed be places in which knowledge is dialogically co-constructed.

Wanaheda Pre-and Primary School

The school observation and document data analysis revealed that the preschool classroom resources that were available at this school to facilitate literacy learning included several educational materials and equipment. Examples of reading materials included books, worksheets, individual sentences, charts, alphabet posters, nursery rhyme posters (poems and songs), names, labels, newspapers, letters, biblical texts, descriptive text and game-related print. Examples of writing materials included a variety of papers, pencils, crayons, chalk, chalkboard and notebooks. Other materials that supported literacy learning in the classroom included rubber, toys, placards, blocks, dices, empty cartons, shoe boxes, tins, puppets, scissors, glue, clay, rulers, stickers, costumes, dolls, and many more.

Wanaheda Pre-and Primary school: Extract 1

The following extract was taken from a reading literacy learning lesson. This class, that *Tuvii* was part of, shared a literacy session around a 'story book', which resulted in some exchange between the learners and their teacher.

(The teacher is reading a storybook with her learners):

22 **T:** I want you to listen. I want you to tell me what you can see. What do you think is on the book?

23 **S:** Money.

24 **T:** What is the color of the money?

25 **S:** Brown!

26 **T:** This is brown. (Pointing at the dress of a child).

27 **S:** Yellow!

28 **T**: Yellow. But what do we call this shiny color? Yellow does not shine!

29 **S:** Gold!

30 **T:** Gold! All of you say gold!

31 **SS:** Gold.

32 **T:** What else can you see?

33 **S:** A boy catching.

34 **T:** A boy carrying money, not catching.

35 **S:** A boy stealing the money!

36 **T:** Ok, there is a tree! These are trees! (Pointing to the picture showing leaves).

37 **S:** No, leaves.

38 **T:** These are leaves, like this one! (Pointing at the leaves in a pot plant close by).

The genre was a story written down in a book. This book combined print with pictures. Before reading the story, the teacher used the pictures on the cover as 'advanced organizers', a metacognitive strategy, to help learners guess or predict what the story was going to be about. The function of the organizer, which is presented to learners before the unfamiliar material is read, is to link what the learner already knows to what the learner needs to know before she/he can successfully learn a task (Groller et al., 1991). The teacher and the learners looked at and talked about a picture on the cover of the book and discussed what the story might be about (lines 22) before reading the actual story, i.e. they talked about this text before reading it. The learners here were reading the picture, providing details based on their teacher's questions and drawing their own conclusions based on the picture on what they thought the story might be about (line 35). The learner response in line 35, '*The boy is stealing the money*', was not

commented on by the teacher, she continued with something else. I maintain that in as much as IRE has value as a quick and adaptable framework to use for informal assessments, it may not be ideal as a base for all classroom interaction. Wells and Arauz (2006, p. 380) suggest that there is a need to treat talk as a site for exploration rather than simply for evaluation, arguing that classrooms can indeed be places in which knowledge is dialogically co-constructed.

When this extract is analyzed against the three planes of focus for sociocultural activity proposed by Rogoff (1995), as newcomers into schooled literacy learning, the model that is offered through the apprenticeship exposes them to the expert-novice dyad relationship in developing literacy skills. At an interpersonal plane of sociocultural analysis, the teacher as an expert guided this face-to-face participation activity. In the class dialogue, the teacher instructed and learners responded. There was no co-construction of understanding as a valuable alternative viewpoint offered by the member of the group in an attempt to make sense of the literacy activity and it was ignored. Thus, the child who was trying to put him/herself in a position to participate was denied an opportunity to do so. This classroom discourse leaned towards being authoritative, insisting on a single truth, imposed by the teacher, dispelling the voice of the other in the group. The process of appropriation may result in some learners understanding literacy as a single truth, imposed hierarchically, with no alternative viewpoints.

This extract exemplifies genres of language used in the preschool. This example shows a common type of classroom talk, the IRE, where the teacher introduces the topic, and asks something, the child responds and the teacher then provides feedback or evaluation. The extract shows how the teacher set up preschool knowledge as capsulated and detached from the children's emergent meaning-making, language and literacy resources; a decontextualized, autonomous model kind of an approach. The questions asked by the teacher remain at the level of literal comprehension and the learners are being 'merely socialized into the dominant meaning system' and constrained from playing active parts in 'transforming and producing it' (Lankshear, 1999, p. 218).

Wanaheda Pre-and Primary school Extract 2

In the following extract, *Tuvii* and her classmates used the chalkboard, sand in front of their classroom, clay and worksheets to learn to write the shape of the number '8' and later the letter 's'. The process of writing down could be seen, heard and felt. Through this activity she was apprenticed to become a writer through practicing graphical representation of letters and numbers in different ways. The extract shows a guided participation encounter in which the learners and their teacher communicate and coordinate their efforts to complete the learning task. Thus, literacy learning helped learners to become apprenticed as writers. The teacher here was making her learners aware that written language takes certain forms and they began to experiment with those forms. The teacher used various resources to assist her learners to form letters and number shapes and thus through participatory appropriation to become writers (Rogoff, 1995).

(The teacher is conducting a writing activity with her class):

93 **T:** Write number eight and sit down!

94 **T:** (All to go out and write 8 on the sand outside the front of the class).

95 **T:** Find your own place, there is enough space. I am coming to look now.

96 **S:** (Interactive, using different languages, pushing for space).

97 **T:** Clay given, to squeeze with one hand while the other is under the table.

98 **T:** Squeeze it and make it long! (No cheating) changing onto the other hand, then use both hands rolling it, making it long (no cheating) making it into a circle and shape it into a number eight [8]. /.. / You must use the whole clay to only make one number eight. /.. /Quickly we have to do other work!

99 **T:** (Moulds hers into an eight) showing it to the class: Look at mine! It looks like that. And I will collect all finished shapes.

100 **T:** (writing activity) I want you to follow up these lines: down and up with your fingers down and up …!

101 **S:** Following the pattern while saying down and up for the two lines on the paper.

102 **T:** Take your crayons, trace the lines, do not color the lines. After you are finished you can color the picture on top. Do not lift your hand until the line is finished. Write on top of the line (many activities – interactive conversation in some local languages, high

noise during the tracing and coloring). Teacher moves around in class and marks learners work as they complete the activity.

This activity apprenticed learners into becoming writers (lines 93, 98, 100, 102). In this case, they were practicing to write the number 8 (eight) on the chalkboard, by using clay, as well as outside in the sand in front of the classroom. They also traced patterns and did coloring. It is evident here that writing was being learned by using multiple modes, visuals and artifacts, making its learning tangible and kinesthetic. Here the learners acted in a multimodal fashion, both in the things they used, the object they made, and their engagement of their bodies: there is no separation of body and mind. As pointed out by Kress (1997), the teacher here treated meaning-making as work, as action and approached literacy learning as coming in forms of numbers, in images and in language which takes on the form of speech and writing. This was also pointed out by Pahl and Rowsell (2006), namely that literacy as a social practice uses reading and writing in association with other modes, such as speech or visual representation.

The extract (line 96) shows that even if in a monolingual English classroom, the learners who spoke home languages other than English, could not withstand reverting to them when the opportunity presented itself in class. This in itself was a restriction on both the teachers and their learners, who are multilinguals, as the other languages and their cultural capital did not form part of their classroom deliberations. The choice of English as a medium of instruction took the learners out of their language, out of their cultural context and content of learning, and placed them in a new territory altogether, where they had to swim or sink.

There is a need to reconsider the fears or mistrust in the use of other languages or modes in the classrooms to honor and acknowledge the learners' multilingualism rather than to ignore it. I see multilingualism as an asset and learners should receive due recognition of this endowment to ensure they are comfortable and competent about their multilingualism. Learners should be encouraged to write in their natural voices (Kennedy, 2006) during early childhood literacy to ensure that vocabulary from their home languages, drawings and other artifacts, for example, can be allowed to help learners to compose, to develop details, competence, and oral and written communication. For early literacy development purposes, learners should be allowed to access

their developed cultural and linguistic base as a bridge to classroom literacy learning, instead of causing them to experience alienation from, and even denial of, their linguistic backgrounds. Learners come to school having mastered their mother tongue, home language or local language or area language. This calls for an increased use of indigenous languages that learners have mastered before entering school in order to cement their emergent literacies and to link the language use in the classroom with their lives outside school. By establishing English as the victorious language, the indigenous languages thus become devalued and stigmatized, consequently the learners' indigenous knowledge base is eliminated or subordinated to English (Martin-Jones, 2007; Bourdieu, 1991). A need therefore exists to reconsider our children's transition to school and their engagement in literacy learning – what is on offer at school and what is it that they can offer? We need to recognize the learners' individual differences, and the differences in the linguistic, social, economic and cultural capital that different children bring to school.

Happy Faces Preschool

The document analysis and observation data revealed that this preschool had a well-equipped library and a storeroom with various literacy learning support materials. The teachers drew relevant materials from such available resources to support their classroom literacy activities. Reading materials included books, worksheets, individual sentences, charts, alphabet posters, nursery rhyme posters, names, labels, newspapers, letters, biblical texts, descriptive text and game-related print. Examples of writing materials included a variety of papers, pencils, crayons, chalk, chalkboard and notebooks. Other materials supporting literacy learning in the classroom included a tape player, rubber, toys, placards, blocks, dices, empty cartons, shoe boxes, tins, puppets, scissors, glue, clay, rulers, stickers, costumes, dolls and many more. The preschool also had a computer laboratory containing computers and keyboards and the learners had opportunities to visit this room according to a schedule.

Happy Faces Preschool: Extract 1

The following extract describes the reading and writing learning activities that Matthias and his classmates were engaged in. Since the learners could not read by themselves, they were required to follow their teacher's instructions to the letter in order to complete this literacy activity.

130 **T:** Open your book, hands under the table. Count the dots and tell me which page number it is. When you are done, put up your hand and you must count inside your heart …
131 **T:** (Teacher reading instructions: circled the short object with red crayon or color pencil). Cover your work. Between these three, which is short? You circle – quietly. Are you all done?
132 **S:** Yes.
133 **T:** Cover your work! (The teacher was requesting to see the product by uncovering the work, and putting the covering back). Circle not color.
134 **T** (Another task): Take any color you want and cross the long object, any color. The teacher explained the instruction which became complicated, and demonstrated and emphasized 'covering of work'. Learners asked when not understanding. The teacher requested silence and 'Mind own business!' (Most learners seemed not to understand the instruction as they made mistakes). (Teacher moved around, explaining).
135 **T:** Write your name on top, go to page 30…

In performing these writing activities, the learners were required to listen and carry out the teacher's instructions (line 130). The learners could not yet read the instructions on the worksheets. They had to follow their teacher's verbal instructions in order to successfully complete a classroom writing activity (line 131). Literacy learning was governed by the norms and expectations of the participants. Line 130 shows that the teacher was disciplining the learners' bodies in particular kinds of ways. They had to be quiet. The learners had to do tasks with their minds, which she referred as in their hearts. When answering a question from the teacher, they were supposed to raise their hands and only answer when called upon to do so.

In line 131 the teacher instructed the learners on what to do. They had to do exactly what they were told. Each learner had to 'circle the short object with red crayon or color pencil'. The assumption here was that every learner had or was supposed to have a 'red' color pencil or crayon. Also, the instruction that every learner had to 'circle not color' (line 133) assumed that

everyone was supposed to execute this task as per the instruction. If you didn't have a red color pencil or crayon, your answer would be considered wrong and if you didn't circle, you were also wrong because you failed to follow the instructions. Thus all the correct answers were to look alike. Any deviation was considered wrong. This was this preschool's way of evaluating its learners' products to determine if they were correct or wrong. In line 135, the learners had to each write their names on their worksheet and submit it for marking/grading by the teacher. Those who had not yet mastered writing their names had to copy them down from their desk where it was displayed.

When this extract is analyzed against the three planes of focus for sociocultural activity proposed by Rogoff (1995), in this apprenticeship the newcomers to this community of practice advanced their skill and understanding through participation and contribution. The teacher planned all moves and directed the literacy activities in which the learners were participating, in a kind of expert-novice dyadic relationship. In this class group, the teacher set the rules, as being the more conversant with the school's literacy practices and language for mediating accepted meanings and values. By doing his/her share in the literacy activity through participation, the learner appropriates how one becomes familiar with reading and writing, its methods, subject matter and how to gain facility in these literacy activities. The nature of guidance and rules of participation that was made available in this activity did not provide for a shared effort or include learner-to-learner engagement.

This extract shows that literacy learning takes place in a regulated classroom environment with minimum disruptions, limited sharing and restricted peer interactions and discussions. In this writing activity, the teacher had an interest in the finished 'product' of writing and had expectations of perfection as she checked and marked her learners' written products. The emphasis on marking the product showed that the learners were expected to learn from their mistakes in order to improve their performance. This approach to teaching literacy leads to producing submissive/docile learners. The teacher was showing that she had power and that things would be done in an orderly manner in her classroom. She showed that there were rules governing how the learners were to participate and behave and how they had to show that they

knew. She wanted to earn the respect of her learners as a result. She was teaching them to take an unquestioning approach to school knowledge.

Happy Faces Preschool: Extract 2

In the following extract, the teacher was revising with her class a Bible story that she had read to the class previously. She expected her learners to give a recount of the story. The teacher used social semiotics, a model, with drawings/artwork displayed on a table to help her learners to give an account of the story.

(The teacher was conducting a revision lesson based on a read-aloud story that they had read before).

29 **T:** We are going to use our green table today. Look here everyone. *Our theme is?*

30 **SS:** Christmas (repeat severally).

31 **T:** *What is this?*

32 **S:** A Christmas tree. There are a lot of things on our table and I am going to ask you questions about the Bible stories we have done for three days.

33 **T:** *And who is this?* [Drawing]

34 **S:** The Angel.

35 **T:** I told you that long, long time ago there was a lady (picking the drawing) and *her name was?*

36 **SS:** Mary.

36 **T:** *Mary lived in a place called what?*

37 **S:** Bethlehem,

38 **T:** No, say Nazareth.

39 **SS:** Nazareth (repeated).

40 **T:** *One day what happened?*

41 **S:** An angel appeared.

42 **T:** *To whom?*

43 **S:** To Mary.

44 **T:** And *What did the angel say?*

45 **S:** You will get a baby.

46 **T:** Don't be afraid. *What happened?*

47 **SS:** God has sent me to you to tell you that you will have a baby boy and you have to name him Jesus.

48 **T:** And *Mary was?*

49 **S:** Frightened.

The teacher had intertwined print literacy with 'what is to hand', the visual mode. The teacher used the Christmas model (line 29) to provide the learners with cues to help them to remember (line 30) the details of the text that was read. The learners used the model, a social semiotics, to make meaning (line 32) as they represented the main characters and actors in the story. I maintain that literacy learning is accessed, not learned only as a paper-based activity. Here the teacher had developed a teaching model around the birth of Christ through which the learners accessed the text. The importance of visual, aural and physical ways of meaning-making was used in literacy learning. The extract demonstrates that literacy learning encompasses a range of multi-models practices and was not solely focused on print literacy. Kress (1997: 99) argues that the effects of multimodality are far-reaching, and deeply affect the children's paths into literacy. The teacher used these communicational landscapes to influence thinking and practices around literacy. This way of conceptualizing text introduced the learners to high-level cognitive strategies such as comprehension monitoring without the learners having decoded or read the text themselves. The children were taught strategic behaviors such as visualizing, making connections and monitoring comprehension through such concrete texts. I maintain that the use of these multi-modal practices in early literacy learning, when coupled with thinking aloud practices under the guidance and direction of the teacher, can help the learners to develop strategic behaviors that are necessary as they engage in reading and writing. Hence, participation is itself the process of appropriation (Rogoff, 1995).

4.1.3 Reflections on literacy learning in preschools

The extracts from Ounona Preschool, Wahaheda Pre-and Primary School and Happy Faces Preschool respectively cover different areas of early literacy learning while at the same time they

display a variety of strategies when teaching literacy. *Extract 1* from Ounona Preschool is about letter knowledge and word recognition, emphasizing the form and not the function of the literacy process. The approach suggests that reading and writing can be broken down into their composite skills that are taught one at a time and mastered. *Extract 2* pertains to language and vocabulary development. *Extract 1* of the Wanaheda Pre-and Primary School covered a pre-reading activity that builds background knowledge by familiarizing learners with the content of the selection. They discuss what the story might be about, thus putting emphasis on the function or meaning of the text. The teacher took on a great deal of authority. The teacher engaged learners in an activity but did not teach them why, how and when to use the strategy independently. *Extract 2* was a writing activity in which the learners attempted to write themselves. The Happy Faces Primary School's Extract *1* was about language development, particularly vocabulary development. The learners were expected to follow instructions in order to complete an activity, while *Extract 2* was on reading comprehension.

A close examination of these extracts reveals that the preschools upheld the autonomous model of skills-based pedagogies. The teachers had a great influence over the flow of literate activities in the classroom through their selection of tasks, time on task and manner of completion, and their use of feedback. I argue that these extracts have skills-based theoretical influence. Skills-based instruction has its roots in behaviorism. Behavioral theories of instruction focus on the curriculum and on the tasks to be learned. Instructional practices linked to behavioral theory are explicit teaching, direct instruction, mastery learning and sequential skills teaching (Lerner, 2000, p. 194). The means by which this skills-based instruction is delivered are teacher-directed and -controlled, teaching academic skills directly rather than leaving it to learner to make inferences from his/her own experiences in order to learn, sequence skills and use carefully sequenced and structured materials. When reviewed closely, the preschool literacy encounters show a process of *acquisition* as opposed to *becoming* (Rogoff, 1995, p. 151). It is based on such connections that the researcher made extrapolations across the three research sites.

The preschool extracts show that engaging with literacy is always a social act from the outset. The teacher and the learners are in a social practice here; the social rules governing the game of literacy learning are being set and the learners are expected to obey them. It is therefore not valid

to suggest that 'literacy' can be 'given' neutrally and then its 'social' effects only experienced afterwards (Street, 2003, p. 78). A set of dispositions which are to constitute the habitus are spelled out and learners are expected to act, react and respond in certain ways during literacy learning in classrooms. Through training and learning, in literacy classroom the learners receive a set of dispositions which literary mold their bodies to behave in a homogenous way despite their differing backgrounds. They are given a 'practical sense', a 'feel for the game', and a sense of what is appropriate in the circumstances and what is not (Bourdieu, 1991, p. 13). As noted by Cook-Gumperz (1986), while trying to promote becoming literate, literacy learning is being controlled, both the forms of expression and the behavior which accompanies the move into literacy. I contend that it is the embodiment through socialization of such dispositions that is not part of one's cultural habitus in some societies that would result in learners taking on an unquestioning and accepting stance to the dominant meaning system without critiquing it. The learners are therefore denied the means to reflect critically on what is being learned and taught in the literacy classrooms and to take an active role in the production of knowledge and meaning (Green, 1988).

The extracts that I presented here show the different ways in which literacy learning is taught and learned at the three preschools in Windhoek urban settings. Such early literacy encounters in preschools showed what is being modelled for the children and explain what the children end up as in terms of being readers and writers at upper primary education phase. Close examinations of the three extracts reveal that the preschools uphold the autonomous model of skills-based pedagogies. This contested way of literacy instruction, the 'banking' model of education, which treats education as depositing knowledge into the heads of the learners who patiently receive, memorize and repeat the deposits (Freire, 1993, p. 53), helps to explain in part one of Namibia's primary concerns about 'why learners in the upper primary and lower secondary phases can't read with comprehension'. In my view this is because making meaning and engagement with the text are not taught as part of early literacy instruction. Early literacy teaching overemphasizes the technical acquisition of reading and writing skills, while Bell calls instead for 'a view of literacy as cultural politics', suggesting that 'literacy becomes a meaningful construct to the degree that it is viewed as a set of practices that functions to either empower or disempower people' (Bell, 1993, p. 144). In this context, literacy was meant to be used as an empowerment tool for the

learners in particular and society in general. Such a 'banking' model of literacy instruction, which focuses on a restricted behaviorist understanding of literacy as consisting of a set of core processing skills, is inappropriate as it produces learners who are not critically empowered to interrogate what is read, but rather learners only capable of breaking the code. Hence, children do not receive rich language experiences during lower primary years to ensure that they are able to read with comprehension when they reach upper primary years. The reading problem that the learners therefore experience at upper primary levels and beyond should be viewed as stemming from a school-based, curricularized and teacher-driven process of literacy learning.

At school, children encounter literacy in the form of highly directed skill and drill teaching which exclude their out-of-school knowledge and interests (Prinsloo, 2005a). Prinsloo further argues that while these children who were taught through the skills emphasis approach 'might adequately cope with the demands of the early primary school curriculum, they were not likely to receive guidance in acquiring and using those literacy forms and practices which are demanded in later years of schooling' (p. 15). This point helps to explain the concern that Namibia faces with regard to 'why learners in the upper primary and lower secondary phases can't read with comprehension'. Their chances of developing successful school careers as readers and writers are limited by their school experiences, rather than their home experiences (see Prinsloo, 2004; 2005a).

In Namibia, the 'traditional' concept of literacy as a largely psychological ability – something true to do with our intellect – and thus a private possession remains dominant. The three extracts presented above bear testimony to this. Extract 1 focuses on coding as a mechanical activity, rather than on reading as sense-making and engagement. Literacy is therefore taught as a set of cognitive skills. The emphasis of formal literacy instruction in this context fell on breaking the code (i.e. code emphasis) and not on understanding what was read (i.e. meaning emphasis). Morrow and Gambrell (2011, p. 39) point out that those who advocate the code-emphasis view argue that because 'the code (the cipher that maps letters on to sounds) is what students do not know, the sooner they learn it, the better they will be able to read'.

This way of conceptualizing reading, as an orderly process, proceeding through a hierarchy of skills from small, simple units (letter/sound relationships) to larger, more complex units has been challenged. The debate positioned the teaching of literacy as a set of cognitive skills (i.e. phonics) against the holistic (whole language) approach to reading. The proponents of the whole language approach for example argue that 'there really is no substitute for examining the reading process in action, not taken away from real-life contexts to a laboratory setting or reduced to the fragmentary abstractions of the usual kind of reading test, but the whole process, in its normal functional context, where readers engage with the text to make sense of it. Tests composed of nonsense syllables, single words, unconnected sentences, or literal 'comprehension' questions on longer passages cannot … be counted as tests of reading' (Goodman, 2005, p. 5).

In the following section, I will present examples of literacy practices in home or in family settings. I will argue that literacy learning takes place in home settings as well and therefore, that literacy is embedded in communicative practice within family life.

4.2 Literacy learning as part of home experiences during the preschool phase

My research children, *Ruben*, *Tuvii*, and *Matthias*, who came from Khomasdal, Katutura and Rocky Crest respectively, started their preschool proficient in their home language and having participated in various literacy practices in their local communities. As this study focuses on early literacy learning, I will focus on preschool literacy learning as it takes place in home or in family settings. Basing my argument on the notion that literacy is a common phenomenon within family life, I also have set out to understand what counts as literacy and how literacy learning is supported at home in Namibia. In the next chapter I move on to argue that home literacy learning has always remained part of the family literacy encounter. The content that was on offer is from locally available literacies and underlies what counts as literacy learning in each of these family settings.

4.2.1 What counts as literacy in the family context?

My research children were engaged in literacy learning at home long before they entered preschools. They joined the preschools each with their own ways of making meaning, with individual linguistic, social, economic and cultural capital. When they started preschool, they had already encountered diverse multi-literacies at home in accordance with their social, economic

and cultural differences. As my research children live in the Windhoek urban area, a modern city, they encounter print around them in its various forms: on food products, on television, in books, on computers; they see pictures, images, and they use mobile phones and play video games in this digital age. I have identified home or family and community literacies in line with Heath (1983), Prinsloo and Breier (1996) and Prinsloo (2013) as:

> The teaching and learning of literacy skills in locally available literacies (which might include schooled literacy) to become competent and knowledgeable in their use in cultural contexts. Children learn what is important within the cultural communities in which they operate through interactions, guidance and participation with more experienced members of those cultures. It is by being socialized into and participating in such different literacy activities that individuals in communities acquire different literacies even if they do not carry the same cultural capital as schooled literacy.

As the research children came from different social, economic and cultural backgrounds, there was a variation in the amount and type of literacy resources available in each home. Such varied home literacy resources and their practices across and within families will shape and influence the children's early literacy learning in their home settings. The diverse literacies that children participate in and observe within their families play a significant part in their literacy development. I am concerned here with what different children bring to school and also what schools make available to these children and how the latter take up such opportunities. The challenge remains as to how the schools are to be empowered to capitalize on their learners' prior learning. Do the schools and other educational practitioners ensure that such early literacy work forms part of the curriculum to ensure that school literacy learning will build on a familiar foundation? Based on what the study revealed as happening in the preschool literacy classrooms, I maintain that they follow a one-size-fits-all approach which in many instances results in learners having to start on a clean page.

I will now present three literacy events in which the three research children participated during home literacy practices during the preschool phase, in order to show that some literacy-related resources are learned and developed in the home context.

4.2.2 Literacy learning events within family life

Ruben's Home Literacy experience

At home, newspapers, biblical text, children's books and other books were available during the observation visit. The family had access to technology; the child used a cell phone and a computer. In this home, siblings supported and motivated each other through creating literacy opportunities for their younger siblings during the absence of their working parents. As a social activity, children learn about literacy through their elder siblings in a process of guided participation.

Extract 1

At home, the older siblings had an influence on shaping their younger siblings' experiences of literacy in the absence of their working parents. The extract that I present here demonstrates a home literacy event, which focused on literacy for pleasure and self-expression.

1 **S1:** Writing name and surname /.. /

2 **S1:** (Briefly left working area)

3 **Older sibling**: Bring die ding saam [bring the thing along]/.. /

4 **S1:** (Back at working area).

5 **Sibling:** (Looks at finished product) Jy moet die **s** (in Chri**s**t) omdraai **ƨ** [you have to turn the **s** around].

6 **S1:** Watter een? (Looks again) [Which one?]

7 **S1:** Ok, ok, so! [Ok, like this!]

8 **S1:** Puts a puzzle together. /.. / (completed successfully)

9 **S1:** Paged through an old workbook of his siblings for a possible drawing to be copied but could not find a suitable one.

10 **Sibling:** Teken enige van daardies. Teken die kar. [Draw any one of those. Draw the car.]

11 **S1:** Waarso? [Where?]

12 **Sibling:** Daarso! (Elder sister brought him an eraser and a pencil). [There!]

13 **S1:** Potlood is stomp (showing sibling). Maak skerp! [The pencil is blunt. Sharpen it.]

14 **Sibling:** Wat het julle met die skerpmaker gemaak? [Where is the sharpener?]

15 **S1:** (Taking a short break) continuing to draw a car.

16 **Sibling:** Teken vir my! [Draw me!]

17 **S1:** Hoekom? [Why?]

18 **Sibling:** Teken jouself, Teken nog iets! [Draw yourself. Draw something else!]

19 **S1:** Ok! A tar road for the ambulance, a house.

In this extract the purpose for literacy was pleasure and self-expression (Cairney, 2003). The child practiced writing his own name (line 1), doing a crossword puzzle (line 8), and drawing (line 10, 19). Lines 6 and 10 show that in addition to using English, the mother tongue or home language remained a support base used during this social interaction with print. Drawing on his funds of knowledge from his personal, social and cultural experiences, *Ruben*, in response to his sibling's demand for yet another drawing (line 18), told himself to draw *a tar road for the ambulance, a house …* (line 19) as a way to display and represent meaning aesthetically. Hence, Ruben as a newcomer is developing his literacy skills and understanding through participation with others within family life, in apprenticeship (Rogoff, 1990, 1995). The two constituted a small group, with his older sibling serving as a challenger and a resource person, and through using communication, achieving their purpose of creating pleasure and self-expression as a family endeavor. Such guided participation through communication and coordination of efforts resulted in literacy learning. Through the use of his mother tongue, Afrikaans, Ruben was putting himself in a position to participate and communicate with his older sibling in order to accomplish a purpose, namely to pass time enjoyably through literacy learning at home.

Tuvii's Home Literacy experience

The document analysis and observation data revealed that as a preschool learner, *Tuvii*'s family had literally no books except for the print-based texts such as worksheets that she brought with from the preschool. The home had a radio and a television as part of its literacy context. Such materials and artefacts were her literacy learning resources at home. Her language learning also took place via her daily encounter with such media texts. *Tuvii* was multilingual and capable of communicating in Damara/Nama, Afrikaans and English. I argue that the various media texts that constituted her home literacy contexts together with other people in her immediate neighborhood played a role in promoting her acquisition of those languages. It was only after the

first home observation visit that her mother went to buy a ‘children’s coloring book’ which Tuvii *colored* in during my home visits.

Extract 1

The data from document analysis and home pictures revealed that *Tuvii*’s home had a radio and a television, print-based texts such as worksheets that she brought with her from the preschool as part of its literacy context. The caregiver supervised literacy activities in the absence of her working mother, especially during weekdays. Compared to the other two children, *Tuvii’*s home space was a single room, with limited variation in the amount and types of literacy resources available. Literacy activities took place in front of the house on the ground or while seated on the floor, using an empty beer crate as a desk to write on. The extract that I present here symbolizes literacy for the purpose of pleasure and self-expression.

(In their room, the caregiver played her music and was singing along at times, not very much bothered with what was taking place in front of the room).

1 **H:** What will you do today; you will color and then do what? Only coloring?
2 **S:** (Lifting shoulders, to mean I don’t know).
3 **S:** Coloring activity. (Visitors (passers-by) at the gate using home language).
4 **H:** Requested caregiver to go assist.
5 **S:** Hulle praat Damara! [They speak Damara].
6 **H:** Teacher verstaan nie Damara nie! [Teacher does not understand Damara].
7 **Caregiver:** Caregiver returning from the gate came to stand by briefly to look at the child coloring and stopped as she didn’t want to pass into the house disrupting the recording,
8 **H:** Wil jy ingaan? Geen probleem nie! [You want to enter? No problem!]
9 **H:** Are you finished?
10 **S:** I am not finished!

11 **H:** You are not finished, still coloring, ok, good, you continue until you are finished, no problem!

12 **S:** I am finished. (Showing the picture).

13 **H:** Now you are finished. That is beautiful! Ok, thank you very much!

The child's main activity was literacy as pleasure and self-expression, with coloring as the main activity during this session. Since the event happened outside, in front of the room, passers-by came to stand at the gate (line 3), speaking in a vernacular language (line 6). Such a one-way-conversation did not yield any exchange (line 6) as the researcher could not understand the language used. *Tuvii,* who also had command of Afrikaans (line 6), used it, to identify the language they were using. I argue that literacy was also visible in this family despite its limited resources, in comparison with the other two cases.

When this extract is analyzed against the three planes of focus for sociocultural encounter proposed by Rogoff (1995), the model was absent from home, yet, the child continued to show her apprenticed literacy skills to the researcher. The newcomer to this community of practice demonstrated her skill and understanding through her participation and contribution in this activity. The child was the one planning all moves and directing the literacy activity in which she participated. Through earlier guided participation under the guidance of the model, she has started to gain facility in this particular literacy activity. She demonstrated participatory appropriation by this subsequent involvement in this literacy activity. Through engagement in this activity, she demonstrated that through learning, she has changed and is capable of handling a later situation based on her previous experience.

Matthias's Home Literacy experience

Document analysis and observation data revealed that at home there were newspapers, letters, biblical text, children's books and computers as well as worksheets, mostly printed from the internet by his father.

Extract 1

I now turn to *Matthias'* home literacy experiences to argue that literacy learning is not only limited to the classroom but that it also takes place at home during the preschool phase. The data from the document analysis and home pictures showed that at Matthias' home there were newspapers, letters, biblical text, children's books and worksheets, mostly printed from the internet by his father, and a computer and other digital items. During this phase, literacy learning activities were assisted by his older siblings, as demonstrated in the following extract:

2 **Sister:** (The activity was to *trace the letters* of the alphabet first and then *write them out* without tracing) **a-j**, Child doing them randomly.
3 **S1:** How did I do this one quick? /.. /Samantha, I am waiting for more!

4 **S1:** (Next was to *copy names* of the family members: Derek, Chantal, Shisha, Samantha, Joshua, Sam prepared on a piece of paper. Matthias had to trace some and copy others in a space provided next to each. Copying could start from left to right or right to left).

5 **S1:** (Next activity was *coloring* a folding piece of paper briefly by opening it): Now is this one not completing the coloring but folding it back.
6 **Sister:** (Came with another *math's task*).
7 **S1:** What must I do here? (Sister seated next to him).
8 **Sister:** You must write the answers inside here.
9 **S1:** Using fingers to help him to solve the problem.
10 **Elder sister:** Samantha, come here! Are you busy?
11 **Samantha:** Yes!
12 **S1:** As Samantha left, stopping the math half way and moving to the next activity of *copying letters* on the spot where he was to copy written numbers, but called for assistance.
13 **S1:** Samantha, come!
14 **Samantha:** Showed him briefly where to write, and left.
15 **S1:** Changed activities and continued *coloring* the folding paper, interacting with family members as he was coloring.

16 **S1:** Frieda, my mom is here! You can even check for yourself! (Repeating) Packed up. Thank you I am done with all my work, Samantha (though some activities were incomplete).
17 **Samantha:** I will see just now.

The extract shows that a home literacy event can house a sequence of different events, e.g., skills development (tracing and writing of letters of the alphabet (line 2, 12); coloring (line 5, 15), and mathematics tasks (line 6)), and pleasure and self-expression (name writing (line 4)). Literacy learning at home in this example was dominated by 'school literacy'. The types and the uses of literacy usually associated with schooling remained prominent here. The shifting from one activity to another also resembled different subjects as they rotate during school periods. Since the siblings who were at home were also school-going, this explained the strong influence of school literacy practices.

When this extract is analyzed against Rogoff's (1995) planes of focus for sociocultural activity, the older siblings at home, with their varying literacy experience, modelled or apprenticed literacy learning to the newcomer by guiding the activities he engaged in. The older siblings acted as resources and challenged each other in exploring literacy activities. At an interpersonal plane of sociocultural analysis, both face-to-face interaction and side-by-side joint participation occurred as the siblings communicated with and directed the newcomer's efforts during literacy learning. Through active involvement and participation in literacy activities the newcomer was being prepared to take control and ownership of similar related experiences in the future. As a participant in literacy learning, the child was involved in appropriation, thus shaping his own understanding and development of literacy as a cultural tool of significance in the future.

4.2.3 Reflections on literacy learning in family life

The three extracts have shown home as sites of varied and distinctive early literacy development. The home is an important site where different literacies are practiced and as such literacy learning is not only a school endeavor but also a home practice. These findings are important because they suggest that literacy learning occurs within families, irrespective of the economic status, race, and social setting they find themselves in. This rich diversity of literacy practices within families in Namibia therefore warrants more research to find out the early reading and writing experiences in our different communities. Such findings can play a vital role in helping

us to understand the building blocks of literacy learning in homes, communities, community organizations, professional organizations and other out-of-school and after-school programs in order to 'acknowledge the complexities, tensions and opportunities' that are found there (Street, 2003, p. 83). Carney (2003, p. 92) notes three different ways in which families can support literacy learning:

- Joint activities – where another person (parent, relative, sibling) provides guidance in a specific literacy event such as story reading.
- Personal activities – involving the child practicing a specific form of literacy on their own (e.g. scribbling).
- Ambient activities – involving literacy practices in which the child is immersed as part of daily life; those practices that occur 'around' the child while they go about their daily lives.

When such literacy activities in Namibia are researched, information as to how time, space and varied resources are utilized during early literacy learning will become available. Such information, as literacy work, will influence our school curriculum and in some instances can be made to become part of the curriculum. The developing child has always been part of familial literacy activities as a social being, and is influenced by what is going on around him or her in different family and home settings. These early literacy experiences that the child shares with his or her parents and with other significant people in his or her environment form the literacy background that the child brings to school. It is by considering and building on such available information through its incorporation into the school literacy curriculum that learners will continue to base their literacy learning on familiar settings and relevant information that they know, thus making early literacy learning an enjoyable experience. I therefore suggest that we consider a paradigm shift in Namibia from an autonomous view of literacy learning to an ideological model in order to allow for literacy instruction to become a sense-making engagement, which is the ultimate goal of reading and writing.

4.3 Conclusion

In this chapter, I presented examples of literacy practices in preschools and at home or in family settings. I argued that literacy learning is encountered in both these settings, i.e. that literacy

learning happens in and out of school and across these sites. I have argued that literacy learning and development take the form of the autonomous model or what is commonly referred to as the 'traditional' model of literacy learning.

In the following chapter, I will continue with the second phase of my research, which followed my research children to their new primary schools as new research sites in order to investigate what counts as literacy learning in them. I will present examples of literacy practices in primary schools and in home settings. I will argue that literacy learning happens in both these settings, i.e. that literacy learning happens in and out of school and across these sites.

5. CHAPTER FIVE: LITERACY PRACTICES IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS AND IN HOME SETTINGS

After completing their preschool year, my research children moved on to join primary schools in the different Windhoek suburbs. I followed these learners to their respective primary schools in order to see how these new settings would be approaching literacy learning. My interest was to see if schools and families would be approaching literacy teaching and learning in similar or different ways. I wanted to see if there was a preferred approach to teaching/socializing their learners/children in literacy skills and to document such differences, if there were any, in these three new school sites. Such differences in approach, if any, would show similarity and differences in literacy learning in these different sites. Since the context of literacy learning is different in these settings, the content on offer in these classrooms was likely to be different as well. The forms textual engagement takes during literacy learning in school and at home is what counts as literacy.

5.1 Literacy learning as a concern of primary education

As I have already stated for the preschool phase, I have taken the position to study literacy learning as a sociocultural practice. During the preschool phase of literacy learning and development I established that literacy learning was approached either through the autonomous model of learning or through the ideological model. For the preschool phase, I have argued that literacy learning and development took the form of the autonomous model, or what is commonly referred to as the 'traditional' model of literacy learning.

For the primary school phase, I maintain my argument that the 'traditional' view of literacy learning continues to dominate and that 'reading readiness' and 'skills-based' models (Adams, 1990; Stuart, 1995, 1999; Morrow & Tracey, 1997) will continue to be influential at primary schools in the Windhoek urban settings in Namibia. I have identified schooled literacy in line with Cook-Gumperz (1986, p. 43) as:

> A formal discipline of literate reasoning made out from commonplace literacy of contemporary society that is taught at school as a set of technical skills, that is, a system of decontextualized knowledge validated through test performances which view linguistic

differences as sociolinguistic deficits and as the cause and product of the inability to use literate reasoning.

Literacy learning in the school context therefore is a social activity of a particular kind that takes place in the classroom, and through the social interaction between teachers and learners, certain behaviors that become identified as 'literacy learning' are developed. During this social activity, learners/children are offered roles to take up, and in the process of participation are prepared for later engagement in related events as certain kinds of readers and writers. As teachers and learners occupy the classroom as a social space, they engage each other in literacy events during which literacy teaching and learning are scaffolded and encouraged as they participate in this culturally valued activity. My reasoning is that by using the skills-based model, what counts as valued performance and knowledge remain limited and curriculum-driven. In most cases, the schools do not work with what their learners know; the preschool, home and community literacy experiences that the children bring to school, their funds of knowledge, are discounted.

5.1.1 The primary school curriculum of literacy

The focus of the curriculum remains primarily on three areas: literacy, numeracy and broad knowledge of the immediate environment of the learner. Literacy learning and numeracy are considered as becoming functional life skills when applied to the world around us; they are not meaningful as abstract skills. The syllabus specifies subject areas or disciplines: First Language, English Second Language, Mathematics, Environmental Studies, Arts, Religious and Moral Education and Physical Education. The period allocation is an indication of the overall time in a five-day time-table which the various subject areas will need under optimal circumstances, but provision is made for flexible time-use. English Second Language is allocated five periods per week (Namibia, 2005, p. 5-6). The 'subject' of interest in the current study is 'English Second Language' with the field of study being 'literacy'. The 'field' refers to 'what is going on in a social activity in question, and includes topic and subject matter' (Green, 1988, p. 169). The extracts that I will present, one for each of my research children, will show what was taking place during a social activity in a classroom setting, which I came to identify as literacy learning.

I will construct my argument in two parts. The first part will present classroom-based literacy events to support my argument that literacy learning in Grade 1 is construed as being isolable

skills existing independently of specific contexts of social practice, as a neutral variable. The second part will present extracts from the home literacy events that support my argument that literacy learning in family settings do not follow the autonomous model (unless it is influenced by school literacy) but that such home/family practice is enacted in contexts involving particular relations and structures of power, values, beliefs, goals and purposes, interests, economic and political conditions, and so on. Hence, the consequences of literacy flow not from the literacy itself, but from the conjoint operation of the text-related components and all other factors integral to the practices in question (see Lankshear, 1999).

5.1.2 Literacy learning events in classrooms

Good Hope Primary School

In the classroom there were books and other reading resources as well as manipulatives for use by the teacher and her learners. Such genres included names, labels, newspapers, letters, biblical texts, children's books, individual words, lists, worksheets, individual sentences, charts, poems, songs, books for various subjects and workbooks.

Ruben's Primary school literacy learning encounter - Extract 1

In the coming extract, Ruben attended a primary school in an affluent residential area for the upper middle-class group in Windhoek. The school offered him literacy learning in the school way, which upon closer analysis presented literacy learning as a decontextualized activity that focused on breaking the code as a way to represent knowledge that is specific to schools. These school learning experiences offered the learners the skills they needed for schooled literacy, as follows:

(The teacher was teaching initial letter-sound recognition in words).

3 **T:** What *picture* are you seeing by number 1?
4 **SS:** Pig.
5 **T:** The first sound?
6 **SS: p** …p … p …

7 **T:** For **p**ig.

8 **T:** What color must you use for the pig?

9 **SS:** Pink.

10 **T:** And the word starts with the sound?

11 **SS: p** sound.

12 **T**: I must also add the word **p**ink so that you know it starts with the same sound.

13 **T:** What animal are you seeing by the second picture?

14 **SS:** A lion.

15 **T:** Is not a lion!

16 **SS:** Tiger.

17 **T:** What is the first sound?

18 **SS: t**- t- t …

The learners were asked to look at the picture and say what they saw. The teacher emphasized the initial or beginning sounds in words (line 5, 16). She was teaching the learners print tracking skills through teaching them the letters and the sounds they represented. In this classroom, Ruben received explicit teaching in phonics as one of the basic word-attack strategies to use to read and write words. Thus, for this group of learners this initiation through direct teaching of basic word-attack skills set the stage for schooled literacy, a particular kind of literacy. To be literate in this context, the learner was expected to demonstrate his/her ability to recognize words or to read words by symbol-sound associations. It is the way in which this register (reading and writing) is acquired inside the school as literacy learning that is contested by those taking on a cultural practice approach.

I contend that the children come from families and homes that have literacy as a practice and that the urban school as a public establishment serves students from these various family backgrounds with their varied literacy practices. At school one would have expected to see a dominant practice from these numerous practices in use in Windhoek urban settings. On the contrary, the lower-level processes such as phonics and drills are taught as a decontextualized skill. The interactional exchange above is teacher-driven and no joint construction of knowledge takes place here. School knowledge is being transmitted, the teacher is communicating

knowledge to the learners irrespective of their different linguistic, social, economic and cultural capital.

This extract is school-based; it has a clear purpose: to socialize the learners in school-based skills (reading/writing) by offering it as an identifiable decontextualized activity involving exposure to print, where important learning is simply of a generalizable nature, where literacy is one thing, not literacies, nor identities, nor practices, and not joint construction of knowledge, etc. This is where the ideological model comes in; it posits instead that literacy is a social practice, not simply a technical and neutral skill (Street, 2003) and that literacy is best understood as a set of social practices which people use in literacy events, and that there are different literacies (Barton, 2007). These different literacies should start to become part of school literacies, thereby introducing more participatory models in which children's histories, languages and background knowledge become incorporated into literacy activities. There is a need to shift from the teacher-directed pedagogy which puts emphasis on phonics, drills and recitation towards 'taking hold of literacy' through getting 'everyone on board' by building on what they are familiar with and participating in, in their different community contexts (Prinsloo & Stein, 2004, p. 81).

Ruben's Primary school literacy learning encounter - Extract 2

The following extract demonstrates guided practice that allowed the learners to reflect on their prior learning. Literacy learning centered on segmenting and blending of known words by pulling words apart into their component sounds, and putting the sounds together to create words. The word 'helicopter' was cut apart in letter clusters and the learners were required to reorganize these clusters and rearrange them to form the word again. Learners had to rearrange their fellow learners who were holding the cards through changing their positions in order to come up with the correct spelling of the word helicopter. The learners were provided with an opportunity to think aloud as they participated in a task that re-grouped the learners who each held a segment of a word in front of the class to get the correct spelling of the intended word.

(The teacher emphasized segmenting and blending to improve her learners' phonemic awareness).

6 **T:** Ahaaa! I will see. (Teacher cutting words apart and asking children to stand in correct order for the letters to form the word, e.g. he-li – cop- ter. Four children stand in front of the class, each one holding a piece of the word).

7 **T:** Is there any meaning for the word? (xxx). What word is the one that we have broken up now?

8 **SS:** Helicopter.

9 **T:** What is the first word?

10 **SS:** co

11 **T:** I want you to read S1's word.

12 **SS:** //co, li //

13 **T:** li

14 **T:** What is S2's word?

15 **SS:** cop

16 **T:** And S3's word?

17 **SS:** he

18 **T:** And S4's word?

19 **SS:** ter

20 **T:** Which one must we place first? As you know, we must read from left to right.

21 **SS:** S2 suggested being the first. (Child moved to first place). The word becomes cop- li-he-ter.

22 **T:** Reading the order and asking if it was the correct word.

23 **SS:** No!

24 **T:** Who must be in the front (first)?

25 **SS:** S3, he-cop-ter-li (moving positions till word is formed).

26 **T:** Say the word,

27 **SS:** Helicopter (repeated).

28 **T:** Think about your homework, né! When you read your words, what word goes with helicopter?

29 **SS:** //**h**… he// (initial sound).

30 **T:** Ok, now people sit down. Now I want you to read (xxx). Fold your arms. As we build the word helicopter, I want you to read the sentence. I want your attention please, ne`!

31 **SS:** The helicopter can fly high (repeat several times).

Through this word study activity, the learners stretched out the word components that resulted in a non-word that they had to play with, based on the sounds they heard for the different cards and which they had to rearrange until the various cards formed a meaningful word. I argue that the Making Words lesson helped the learners to learn a new strategy of how to put sounds together to create words. Such instruction strategy - Guided Discovery - helped the learners to develop phonemic awareness as they stretched out words and listened for the sounds they heard and the order of those sounds. Such an activity allowed learners to learn letter cluster sounds that they had to use to decode new words that consisted of similar clusters when reading or spelling new words in writing.

When this extract is analyzed against Rogoff's (1995) planes of focus for sociocultural activity, the apprenticeship helps the learners to advance their skill and understanding through participation and contribution in this activity. The expert-novice dyadic relationship in which the learners are participating is teacher-planned. She plans all moves and directs the literacy activities in which the learners are participating. By being a participant in this literacy learning activity, the learners appropriate and become prepared to engage in subsequent similar literacy activities. The nature of guidance and rules of participation made available in this activity provided for a shared effort or included the learner-to- learner engagement.

Wanaheda Pre-and Primary School

In the classroom there were books and other reading resources as well as manipulatives for use by the teacher and her learners. Such genres included names, labels, newspapers, letters, biblical texts, children's books, individual words, lists, worksheets, individual sentences, charts, poems, songs and workbooks. Materials from various sources were simplified, photocopied and used as worksheets by learners as they learned to read and write. The teacher and the learners interacted

with each other during literacy learning, using such available materials as teaching resources. Various activities such as holding, displaying, giving, reading, writing, during the literacy learning in the classroom used these materials and resources.

Tuvii's Primary school literacy learning encounter - Extract 1

The extract that follows shows that literacy learning at the primary school that *Tuvii* attended was skill-focused and decontextualized. In this classroom, the learners were taught to recognize sight-words, as not all words can be read through sequential decoding. Through showing the inconsistencies in grapheme-phonemes correspondences in the English language, the learners were made aware that English is not a transparent language and that some words are read visually, without hesitation or further analysis. There was no context to what was happening here. Literacy learning was being imposed on the learners, who had to acquire this skill as a school-taught and classroom-learned collection of skills (Cook-Gumperz, 1986). There was no joint construction of knowledge by the learners and their teacher; the learners were receiving the information from their teacher and by learning and acquiring what they received from their teachers their literacy skills would be developed throughout their school career.

(The teacher is teaching sight words to the class).

8 **T:** What does play begin with? Say play!
9 **SS:** Play (chorus).
10 **T:** Begins with?
11 **S:** p /p/
12 **SS:** p p pp!
13 **S:** Can I leave the class?
14 **T:** No, you can't leave the class. I am teaching.
15 **T:** Play begins with /p/ like a … Peovelo stop talking! /p/ … Can you all do this? /p/ like you are blowing your birthday candle, you go /p/ that is the action. And this is how you write p, The two boys were playing. Help me to write play!
16 **SS:** p-l-a-y (sounding).

17 **T:** Our sight word for this Unit is *play*, and the second one is, What color am I holding?

18 **SS:** White!

19 **T:** What color is this, what color can you see?

20 **SS:** Green!

21 **T:** What color is this one?

22 **SS:** Yellow!

23 **T:** What color is our class, the wall?

24 **SS:** Yellow!

25 **T:** So, the second sight word is *yellow*, and what does yellow begin with?

26 **SS:** /ye/llows, /ye/llow!

27 **T:** y for yoghurt (demonstrating eating action). Can we all pretend we are eating yoghurt! And this is how we write y. Can you help me to write yellow (learners and teacher sounding all letters as teacher writes them down). /. /

The teacher was teaching sight words to her learners (lines 17, 25). The learners were sounding out the words while also visualizing how such sounds were represented in writing (line 15, 27). While the focus was going to be on two words only: *play* and *yellow*, the learners demonstrated that they had a repertoire of colors as part of their vocabulary, even if they had to limit themselves to those selected by their teacher as the focus words. The letter ***a***, for example is given a different sound in words like *play* and similarly the letter ***w***, at the end of the word *yellow* was given a different sound. The inconsistent phoneme-grapheme relationship or spelling pattern was emphasized for pl*a*y and yello*w*. The learners were introduced to the rule that the relationship between the letter and its sound equivalent is not always predictable in English. The teacher was helping the learners to hear sounds in words while using a spelling approach to help them note through observational learning how to blend these sounds into meaningful words as she asked them to help her to write the words on the chalkboard (lines 16, 27). Hence, participation itself is the process of appropriation (Rogoff, 1995). Here the emphasis was still being placed on componential skills while bringing in a new dimension that now called on learners to reflect so as to notice the difference in how the whole word, when viewed and read in its wholeness, offered context clues to read such words independent of their individual letter-sounds relationships. Therefore, what is taught and learned during the primary school constitute

the ‘mode’ of learning, the channel or means of the exchange (Green, 1988, p. 170), which is the formal scholastic training (Houston, 1983). It is at school that learners need to acquire such an appropriate register (sight-words), if they are to be competent within the terms of reference of the subject area, ‘English Second Language’.

I maintain that the “tenor”, which Green (1988, p. 170) defines as the interpersonal relationship of those participating in the social activity, remains authoritative. The teacher remained in control of this supposedly mutually involving socio-culturally structured collective activity (Rogoff, 1995) and focused on only the two sight-words that were earmarked for the period or session. Any incidental learning through learners’ contributions and comments (e.g. the color ‘white’ as sight word) were not capitalized on as another relevant example of sight words, thus limiting their role to “receiving” rather than participating in a sense-making activity (e.g. known colors and how to read them).

Tuvii’s Primary school literacy learning encounter - Extract 2

In the following extract, the teacher was writing familiar words that the learners had learned in their literacy classroom. Their teacher used *Tuvii* and her classmates as resource persons as they listed familiar words that they had used in their previous lessons. The teacher wrote the listed words on the chalkboard while verbalizing each one. I argue that the teacher was modeling to her learners how pronunciations of oral linguistic units were mapped to particular written forms, thus expanding their sight vocabulary. The learners were also observing their teacher writing letters in ‘chunks’ to respond to the complexity of English visual patterns and their relationships to sound. She also demonstrated how they had to write neatly and clearly so that their product was legible.

(The teacher was writing the words the learners recalled from their previous lessons on the chalkboard as a writing aloud activity).

> 99 **T:** water, dolphin, use, crocodile (teacher writing words that were used during the lesson on the chalkboard as children mention them).

100 **T:** (no more animals), perfumes. I used a word that begins with an **n** and ends with a **d** (sounding), it has two sounds in the middle, but when you put those sounds together, they make one sound and ends with a **d** (sound), n__d.

101 **S15:** need!

102 **T:** Thank you, S15, it is: need!

103 **T:** (listing of words and writing continued) need, skating, and dam, fish.

The learners observed (observation learning) the teacher in the act of writing while saying aloud the various phonemes that make out the words. The learners had to learn how to write by watching how their teacher was doing it. The learners were the observers and their teacher the model. Hence, participation through observation is itself the process of appropriation (Rogoff, 1995). I argue that the teacher demonstrated to her learners how to write words they heard by carefully listening to the sounds and the combinations of those sounds. The learners were learning by first observing how their teacher did that before they imitated her in performing the task independently. Amongst other writing aspects, the learners observed the layout, spacing, spelling and handwriting of their teacher. In line 100, the teaching progressed from initial sounds to the final sounds and then to medial sounds. The learners added the missing medial letters as per the clue that the teacher provided (line 101). The teacher thus used the cloze procedure, a technique that stems from the Gestalt idea of closure, the impulse to complete a structure and make it whole by supplying a missing element (Lerner, 2000: 425). The learners were asked to fill in the blanks by writing the letters they thought had been left out in order to form that word. The teacher was therefore preparing her learners to become readers and writers by focusing on the components that made a word. By decomposing the word into its smaller sounds or phonemes the teacher made the learners aware that words are made up of smaller sounds that are blend together in writing to constitute words. It was from these bits and pieces that learners were exposed to that some form of authentic writing started to appear.

In the next extract, *Tuvii* used such knowledge to invent an authentic sentence that she showed to both her teacher and parent. She created a text that was meaningful and with a clear message that she was able to show to the teacher as well as to the parent at home. I argue that *Tuvii* was acquiring abilities as an author. She had a clear intention to communicate with an audience. She

metacognitively monitored her written text for meaning while having a particular audience in mind.

(The class was involved in different activities; Tuvii was in the group that was required to write a sentence using the word ‘water’ in it).

> 106 **T:** The other group that S4 was in, was given a different activity. A waterdrop-shaped cut paper was given to each child in the group. They had to write their names on top. The teacher gave them pictures from the earlier activity about the uses of water. They had to cut them smaller with provided scissors and paste them immediately under their name on the piece of colored drop-shaped paper.
> 107 **T:** Next, they were expected to write a sentence on the use of water as per their picture. The teacher reminded this group about the basics of writing: remember how to start a sentence, note your punctuation marks, your commas and full stop. The teacher expected the learners to read what they had written down to the rest of the class at the end of the activity.
> 108 **S4:** Pasted a cup of tea and her sentence under it was, **My tir is mak wef water.**

The extract shows *Tuvii*’s writing skills during an independent writing activity. She had to spell words she has not yet learned to spell. In placing her experiences with ‘water’ down on paper, she stretched out words and focused on the sounding units and put down letters for the sounds she heard (line 108). When writing her sentence, she remembered to demonstrate the correct application of writing skills (line 107). She used approximations of conventional forms well in order to produce her sentence. Her self-expression here was through invented spelling. She attempted to use phoneme representations but still had limited knowledge. The sentence, which has an Afrikaans language influence and therefore demonstrates the child’s rich language resources, could be roughly translated into Afrikaans as ‘My tee is gemaak met water’.

Tuvii was encouraged to create and write a message using the knowledge she had of the system, no matter how incomplete. The teacher here was reassuring, allowing them to write in their own way as authors. *Tuvii* was given an opportunity to practice reading and writing in a meaningful

way. The text produced by the learner during this literacy event was decipherable and meaningful, demonstrating that there was a link and a connection between school literacy and real-life experiences. The learner here was given the opportunity to be engaged in the whole activity in a meaningful context. Hence, participation itself is the process of appropriation (Rogoff, 1995). The product that *Tuvii* produced here, demonstrated the thinking processes that went into it. She had an audience in mind, as it was expected that they would read their sentence to the class (line 107). She intended to produce a meaningful sentence that the audience would understand. After completion of this piece of writing, it was read to the class and her representations created meaning. Through this exploration, she used written language to communicate and express meaning, which is the essence of literacy learning.

I argue that as a novice writer, it was just fair to celebrate this kind of early writing attempts. The activity gave *Tuvii* a choice in what she had to write. She used her early emerging literacy-relevant skills to compose her sentence. *Tuvii* attempted to write words by attending to their sound units and associating letters with them in a systematic although unconventional way. Such a positive writing encounter based on the use of invented spelling will encourage *Tuvii* to be willing to write and to take risks in a failure-free environment, and she will come to understand that writing is a pleasurable form of communication in which thoughts are translated into symbols that mean something to other people. The above extract demonstrated that learning to write was a social process, done for and with others (Rogoff, 1995).

St Peter Primary School

The classroom had books and other reading resources as well as manipulatives for use by the teacher and her learners. Such genres included names, labels, newspapers, letters, biblical texts, children's books, individual words, lists, worksheets, individual sentences, charts, poems, songs and workbooks.

Matthias's Primary school literacy learning encounters - Extract 1

Matthias, who had now joined a primary school in an affluent residential area for the upper middle-class group in the Windhoek urban area, was called on to read the text aloud in class. He was required to use his foundational knowledge of word attack skills to read the text. These strategies were taught one at a time and in isolation and repeated over the course of a few lessons or a protracted period of time to ensure that they would be learned successfully. The short sentences were practiced through repetition and chorus-reading. The text offered to the learners was read solely for 'reading instruction' with no clear and compelling purpose in mind for reading. The learners had to show that they were capable of deciphering the presented familiar text.

(The learner was asked to read the text to the class alone).

28 **T:** The next page (Matthias).
29 **M:** Quiet.
30 **T:** Spotty …. quiet.
31 **T:** What's the first letter? (Pointing).
32 **M:** Child sounds (xxx).
33 **T:** Now, put it together!
34 **M:** Quiet.
35 **T:** Can, isn't it?
36 **T:** Now listen, Ok, Sweetie! Read the one you wanted to read then.
37 **T:** Here …
38 **M:** Here comes.
39 **T:** A little bit louder!
40 **M:** Spotty.
41 **T:** Let me help you (Reading together):
42 **T:** Here comes Spotty (pointing in Matthias' book).
43 **M:** Here comes Spotty.
44 **T:** Come Spotty come.

45 **M:** Come Spotty come.

46 **T:** Come and run.

47 **M:** Come and run.

48 **T:** Next one?

49 **M:** Quiet.

50 **T:** See Sam run.

51 **M:** See Sam run.

52 **T:** Let's quickly read page 4 all together with Matthias. One-two-three …

53 **SS:** Here comes Spotty (Sam) ...

When asked to read individually, Matthias demonstrated that his word recognition ability was still not good enough (line 29). The teacher (line 31) helped him with a possible reading strategy that he could use, the sounding out (line 32). The learner needed to master the connections between graphemes and phonemes in order to decode the words. Even though the teacher's scaffolding action (line 35, 41) took place through shared reading, the learner still needed further assistance in developing his word recognition skills, as well as individualized assistance to move from effortful word identification to effortless word identification and fluent reading. To improve his oral reading, he needed more practice in the skill. The reality that he faced though, was that of disappearing into a group identity (line 52) making it difficult for him to receive early mentorship to ameliorate his reading problems. Such practice seemed missing as the teacher continued with the next activity without any clear plan or expressed intent to assist him with the manifested problem.

Learning to read was more like automatic word recognition based on familiar text learned by heart for those learners who could 'read' it, dragging along those who were less capable. There was no elaboration on what was read. Reading was choppy, uncertain, stretched and plodding. The teacher used chorus reading as a practice to introduce learners to read at the same time, at the same pace, and to use the same strategies in the same way. The learners had to keep pace by pointing out each word, and thus reading each word individually. It remains good for recitation rather than to enable the learners to leave the teaching event with new perspectives, important information, or new ideas. No quality talk, learner-to-learner or teacher-to-learner was

undertaken about the text that was read. The literacy activity here taught learners to decode words with speed as part of a literacy framework that they had thus far been exposed to. These literacy learning strategies emphasized the learning of literacy skills as isolated components which were taught one at a time, with speed, efficiency and fluency being practiced during this literacy activity. The learners were still to be exposed to a balanced literacy diet that was to integrate decoding, understanding of texts, and construction of meaning of texts into one meaningful lesson. Literacy, as reading and writing, was focused on transmitting and receiving of texts.

Matthias's Primary school literacy learning encounters - Extract 2

In the next extract, the teacher combined different literacy activities – sounding out words, arranging letters to form words and writing out words during the literacy learning lesson. The activity exposed learners to the connection between spoken and written modes. They segmented the sounds in words in order to recognize their written representation through correctly making links between sounds and letters.

(The teacher combined different foundational skills with writing during this literacy activity).

93 **T:** What is the first letter?

94 **SS:** **h** (*sounding*) **a** **s** put it together

95 **SS:** has.

96 **T:** Again S1.

97 **S1:** h- a-s

98 **T:** has. Ok!

99 **T:** Listen, last week we did something interesting. The letters in a word were mixed up and you had to *arrange* them in order. What do we call that?/What is the name whereby we have to arrange those letters?

100 **SS:** //It was mix up (xxx), scramble //

101 **T:** Yes!

102 **T:** cta

103 **S:** cat

104 **T:** How do we *write* cat?

105 **T:** Close your eyes, say it as you write (in the air)

106 **SS:** Wrote in the air.

107 **T:** (wrote) ckea

108 **S:** cake

109 **T:** How do you write, cake?

110 **S:** ca (teacher ticking ckea),

111 **T:** Two letters gone, two left).

112 **SS:** e-

113 **T:** no- no!

114 **SS:** //e; k //

115 **T:** k, and the last one?

116 **SS:** e

117 **T:** Writing ke at the end (laughing) (xxx).

Here the learners were engaged in a literacy learning task to read and write, guided by the teacher. This literacy activity exposed learners to read words through letter-sound instruction (line 94) by segmenting the sounds that were constituting a word; word recognition (line 102, 107) through figuring out mixed letters into recognizable words; as well as writing (line 105). Through using the spelling approach the teacher was helping the learners to learn letter sounds and how to segment words and blend letters into words. The writing exercise that required the learners to write such a word from memory without looking at its written form allowed them to start mastering the spelling of short, easy words before moving on to longer and more complex words through the transfer of skills. I argue that the instructional emphasis was placed on the product of writing. There was an expectation of perfect and correct product based on sound-symbol appreciation. Learners were learning to write the words correctly. The learners were responsive to their teacher and they used language as they thought about how the letters should be rearranged to form words, and verbalized as they print it. In this way, the printing or copying helped to bind the visual, motor and phonological images of the letters together at once.

5.1.3 Reflections on literacy learning in primary schools

The primary school extracts show that it is this traditional concept of literacy as reading and writing that dominates what counts as literacy learning in Windhoek urban primary schools. The teachers had a great influence over the flow of literate activities of the classroom through their selection of tasks, time on task and manner of completion, and their use of feedback. Being literate has meant mastering decoding and encoding skills. Such skills are considered building blocks for doing other things and for accessing meanings. That is, once people are literate, they can use 'it' (the skill repertoire, the ability) in all sorts of ways as a means to pursuing diverse benefits (employment, knowledge, recreational pleasure, personal development, economic growth, social mobility, innovation, success in society, better citizens etc.) regardless of the social and economic conditions (Lankshear, 1999; Gee, 2008; Street, 2003; Friesen, 2014). In this regard, it is only some individuals who gain through acquisition of literacy. Gee (2008) shows that deprived classes and ethnic groups remain oppressed through literacy. He argues that "greater literacy did not correlate with increased equality and democracy or with better conditions for the working class, but in fact with continuing social stratification as it served as a technology for the continued selection of members of one class for the best positions in the society" (p. 81). It is in opposition to the "autonomous model" of literacy that an "ideological model" attempts to understand literacy in terms of concrete social practices and to theorize it in terms of the ideologies in which different literacies are embedded. Literacy – of whatever type – has consequences only as it acts together with a large number of other social factors, including political and economic conditions, social structure, and local ideologies' (Gee, 2008, p. 80). It is these debates that I suggest Namibia should look into as it reviews its education theory and practice.

5.2 Literacy learning as part of home experiences during primary school phase

My research children, Ruben, Tuvii and Matthias are now in primary school. They were engaged in literacy learning at home and in school during the preschool phase. During the primary school year, they all stayed with their families in the family home. They continued to engage in literacy learning at home and in school. They joined the primary school phase each with their own ways of making meaning, with individual linguistic, social, economic and cultural capital. They had already encountered diverse multi-literacies at home and in school during their preschool year on

which they continue to build further literacy learning. I argue that the influence of family members and caregivers does not cease as the child enters primary school. As a social practice, parents and other family members continue to be involved in literacy activities from which their children benefit.

5.2.1 Literacy learning events within family life

Ruben's home literacy experiences

During home literacy learning, the more advanced siblings in the family served as resource persons. They focused on using literacy resources coming from school, like individual words, lists of words, worksheets and individual sentences. This home also had digital technologies as part of family life. *Ruben's* family life literacies included literacy for accessing or displaying information using the computer as well as literacy for skills development. His more advanced siblings and his parents served as resource persons.

Extract 1

The extract that I will draw from here used literacy resources which came from school, like individual words, lists of words, worksheets and individual sentences that his siblings used to support his literacy learning in this case.

(Ruben's brother and sister interaction during a writing practice event at home).

48 **B:** Showing him words to look at.
49 **R:** No! I know all those words,
50 **B/R:** Spelling/dictation commenced:

1. volt
2. when
3. buns
4. look
5. deep
6. jug

7. cat
8. stop

51 **B:** When marking *look*, the last k in look did not stand well and gave a half mark.

52 **R:** Objecting and calling on his sister (S): Ek het ’n k by *look* geskryf dan maak hy ’n half-merk. Ek het ’n *l-u-u-k*. [I wrote a *k* at look but he gives half a mark, sounding all letters written].

53 **B:** Kyk hy het *k* nie mooi geskryf nie. [He didn’t write a proper k].

54 **R:** Jy maak ook so! [You do the same].

55 **S:** Nog steeds het hy ’n *k* gemaak. Hy is nog bietjie klein, hy leer nog hoe om sy letters te skryf. [He still made a *k*. He is young, he is still learning to form letters].

56 **R:** Scoring 9.5/10.

At home, learning to read and write was done through engagement in repetitive activities of reading and writing (copying), which was backed up by the use of the grapheme-phoneme match strategy. This extract demonstrates the complexity and the richness of the family support network that was available to Ruben at home (a brother and sister). This social exchange used mixed codes and crossing to support literacy learning at home. The aim of the writing activity was to learn the words taught at school and to write them correctly from memory (line 48). Line 49 shows that Ruben knew how to write all the words. His participation with others and his self-involvement in this social practice made him observe what others do; he became more familiar with other ways of writing, such as cursive writing. Writing properly and correctly was emphasized and became a bone of contention during the feedback stage after test-taking (line 53). Ruben seemed quite observant (line 52) and participated during the other sessions when his older siblings worked in their books. He argued that the way he wrote his *k* was similar to how his older brother also writes (line 54). The older sister’s intervention helped to put Ruben at ease, and also called to order the brother who was assisting him with this literacy activity to be lenient and to consider as correct the resemblance to the target word (line 55). Through his active interactions and observations during literacy activities at home, Ruben learned the different ways to write letters, manuscript, cursive writing as well as keyboarding at home. His father remarked during one of the home visits that Ruben had since early age always been vigilant and observant when the other siblings who attended school were doing their work and at times even correcting them. Such a sociocultural analysis shows how individuals with the assistance from other

members transform, as together they constitute and are constituted by sociocultural activity (Rogoff, 1995).

Tuvii's home literacy experiences

At home, *Tuvii*'s mother continued to support her with literacy learning. She mainly used worksheets and word lists that came from school and a storybook during their home literacy activities. Literacy learning served the purpose of skills development by participating in homework-related activities, as well as for establishing and maintaining relationships, by reading a storybook with her.

Extract 1

In the extract below, Tuvii's mother took on varied interactive roles; she observed Tuvii as she read and copied words written at school, assisted with reading words she could not pronounce, sharing different parts of a writing task such as dictating to the child some words to write down, and providing help and information as required by the child. I maintain that Tuvii gained from her involvement with her mother through participatory appropriation in this sociocultural activity (Rogoff, 1995).

(The parent interacted with her child during a reading and writing activity at home).

1 **Resident lady:** Goeie middag! (Greeting H) [Good afternoon!]
2 **H:** Goeie middag.
3 **T:** (Read short sentences from school. Her mother was looking on. Her reading was not clearly audible due to environmental noise. Very slow word-for-word reading. However, the child could slowly say most of the words one by one).

°Pam has *(had)* a cat.
The cat is fat.
The fat cat is bad.

Bad fat cat sat in the jam.
In the bag went *(assisted)* bad fat cat.
Dad and Pam ran with *(assisted)* bad fat cat to the tap *(assisted)°*

(Writing: While mother was looking on).

4 **T:** (Name and surname written on top of the page. Writing from memory a few words that appeared in the reading passage):

1. Bad. fat. cat. (Each word had a full stop).

5 **T:** Went to fetch the paper with words, after writing the first words.
6 **M:** (Mother, taking it (xxx): Skryf hier wat ek jou se, né [write here what I am telling you] and started dictating the words for her to write).
7 **M**: 2. Boy.
8 **T:** *b* is facing this side (left) or that side (right)?
9 **M:** Facing right.
10 **T:** (writing it correctly) boy.
11 **M:** girl.
12 **T:** Which side is it facing?
13 **M:** It's facing that side (left)..
14 **T:** girl (Writing it correctly)
15 **M:** mother.
16 **T:** ma.
17 **M:** How do you write 'the'?
18 **T:** mathe.
19 **M:** The last one?
20 **T:** mathen.
21 **M:** Correcting the **n** for a **r.**
22 **T:** (Erasing the **n** and writing **r)** mather (not noticing the spelling mistake, the activity continued).

23 **M:** Skryf **is** [Write **is**]

24 **T:** is

25 **M:** in

26 **T:** (xxx) …

Tuvii read the sentences she wrote down at school. Her mother assisted her with words she could not pronounce (text following line 3). After reading, *Tuvii* continued to write (line 4) words from memory. Her writing format resembled that of the school lesson. She modeled the classroom-style of page organization, with name and surname on top of the page as if the activity was for submission to her teacher, and numbered the words she wrote. As the mother joined her (line 6) for the writing event, she read out the words from the school list which she had to spell. In lines 8 and 12 *Tuvii* was asking for assistance so as not to reverse the initial letter in the word to be written. This showed that she was aware that she still had a problem and reversed those letters. Not to make the mistake, she requested for assistance to write correctly. The last word of the activity was 'mother' (line 15), a sight word. She did not remember how to write it and she requested assistance from her mother. The assistance that was rendered resulted in an error when it was finally written. The mother did not cross-check the spelling, resulting in a spelling mistake (line 22). *Tuvii* was assisted to develop literacy skills for the school's ways of teaching. Such an achievement-oriented approach taken at home in support of literacy learning at school strengthened the child's ability to deal with reading and writing as taught at school.

Through their participation in the literacy event, the participants gained from their involvement in this sociocultural activity. As argued by Rogoff, *Tuvii*'s active participation in the activity ensured that she gained facility in an activity, 'the process *is* the product'. *Tuvii* and her social partner (mother) are interdependent, 'their roles are active and dynamically changing, and the specific processes by which they communicate and share in decision-making are the substance of cognitive development' (Rogoff, 1995, p. 151).

From a sociocultural approach, the focus is not on taking in information from the outside, storing it and retrieving it, but how people participate in this activity, changing their roles from being guided to becoming independent users of such skills in meaningful ways in real-life settings.

Matthias's home literacy experiences

Matthias' home literacy practices included literacy for establishing or maintaining relationships, for pleasure and self-expression, and for skills development (see Cairney, 2009). His home had genres such as newspapers, alphabet letters, children's books, worksheets, puzzles, computers and cellphones as literacy resources. *Matthias*' home literacy learning activities included tracing activities and writing, as well as showing his experiences with technology. The more advanced siblings served as resource persons at home. They focused on using literacy resources coming from school, like individual words, lists of words, worksheets and individual sentences. He had parents as resource persons at home and participated with them in literacy learning activities, school-related as well as for leisure.

Extract 1

The extract below presents one such an encounter in which modes such as images, sound and movement had entered the learner's everyday multimodal social and communicative worlds. Here Matthias engaged his father in a game for pleasure:

1 **F:** Good luck, Boikie!
2 **F:** Matthias, you crooked!
3 **M:** You didn't put the (xxx), Daddy!
4 **F:** You had to do it.
5 **Peers:** Three youngsters who were playing outside came indoors to peep at what Matthias was doing. Giggling!
6 **M/Peers:** Observing and looking on with a few remarks and questions in soft voices for Matthias (xxx). Matthias continued the game.
7 **One child:** Matthias, are you playing against your Dad?
8 **M:** Yes.
9 **M/Child:** (xxx)
10 **Child:** Matthias, are you not learning cursive?
11 **M:** What is cursive?

12 **M:** Continuing with game, self-talk as he plays.

13 **M:** You think you will take my castle? You can't! …

During this literacy activity, Matthias used technology to interact with his father as they played a game on the computer with each other. He thus had exposure to different technological landscapes of media texts as part of his family's social practice in the home. Matthias had a relationship with the screen which was yet another primary text within the home. The use of computer games at home served as a means to facilitate family functioning and strengthening family bonding. Such engagements also facilitate the development of spatial and problem-solving skills. In this apprenticeship, the newcomer to a community of practice advanced his skill and understanding by participating with his father. Their hands-on joined participation was preparing Matthias in computer literacy learning. Such participation is itself the process of appropriation (Rogoff, 1995: 151).

5.2.2 Reflections on literacy learning in family life

The learners who participated in the study had access to various modern digital environments (at both school and at home) as 'placed resources', with local effect (Prinsloo, 2005, p. 88), and were able to manipulate computers, cellphones and other available technological devices, especially in their homes. New literacy practices became visible with their practical uses across contexts as part of the larger practices. With the 'social turn', new literacies and their literacy practices which were not necessarily recognized by schools came to receive emphasis. For example, Kress (1997, 2010) has shown how print literacy is intertwined with other modes, especially the visual mode, and how reading changes as society shifts from a reliance on the page to reading the screen. Prinsloo (2005 b) argues that while the old literacies were print-based and language-based, the new literacies are integrating the written, oral and audiovisual modalities of interactive human communication with screen-based and networked electronic systems. Such texts, when used in their varieties by school teachers, would make aspects of reading, writing and oral presentation more meaningful to the learners. Dyson (1993, p. 6) argues that children from diverse cultural backgrounds draw on diverse cultural materials (e.g. stories, jokes, songs, language, plays etc.) to accomplish social work such as building relationships among themselves. She points out that children for whom literacy was not emphasized at home bring 'diverse experiences to symbol-producing – talking, drawing, playing, story-telling, and for some, some

kind of experience with print, all resources with which both teachers and learners can build new possibilities'. Prinsloo and Stein (2004, p. 82) maintain that 'literacy pedagogies which work productively and sensitively with indigenous, local forms of knowledge, drawing on children's multiple semiotic resources *in combination with* other forms of knowledge which are dominant and powerful, like academic and critical literacy, might be an important starting point'. Prinsloo and Baynham (2013, p. xxxiv) also point out that 'while classrooms have mostly stuck to maintaining clear borders between the languages and learnings of school and the out-of-school languages and literacy practices of bilingual youths, research have called for translanguaging and situated literacies in the classroom, based on the argument that all literacy pedagogical approaches should be contextualized and start with the language and literacy resources that children bring to school'.

It is by bringing the social and the multimodal/semiotic together to make 'new literacies' that we can accommodate our learners in Windhoek urban settings. Through such a design, everybody will at some point in their literacy learning encounter a text or other cultural art forms or genres that will appeal to them because of familiarity. It is through the cross-fertilization of the 'local' with the 'dominant' that we can make literacy learning better for all. I maintain that the dominant one-way flow of schooled literacy from educational institutions to home should now be reconsidered in favor of multi-literacies and multimodality and that teachers and curriculum developers start to take meaning from what their learners bring with them into the classroom. We have seen that literacy learning is not school-based only but that the home environment also presents learners with other categories of literacy practices.

5.3 Conclusion

In this chapter, I covered examples of the forms textual engagement takes during literacy learning in primary schools and at home. I established that during the primary school phase, literacy learning in schools was approached through the autonomous model of learning or what is commonly referred to as the 'traditional' model of literacy learning. Literacy learning at home presents learners with other categories of literacy practices. Learners were able to manipulate computers, cellphones and other available technological devices. There is a need to build bridges between the home and school literacy learning practices through contextualization of

pedagogical approaches to start with the language and literacy resources that children bring to school.

In the following chapter, I will present my conclusion. I make out the argument that Namibia should endorse the sociocultural approach to literacy learning by way of a paradigm shift, that it allow for a new definition of literacy based on the sociocultural model to evolve, and revisit its current educational practices in line with the new paradigm.

6. CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION AND OUTLOOK

The study, which was a small-scale ethnographic-style inquiry, offers a new paradigm to the study of literacy learning in a Windhoek urban setting in Namibia. This paradigm allowed me to come directly into analytic contact with the 'raw data' of everyday early reading and writing teaching and learning in pre- and primary schools and at home in Windhoek urban school settings in order to understand what counts as literacy in these settings. By selecting 'telling cases', the evidence of what counts as literacy and how it was supported during its early learning was pointed out. This position was also pointed out by Freebody and Freiberg (2001, p. 226):

> It is not satisfactory to investigate features of organized cultural practices, such as reading and writing events, simply by invoking a pedagogic or research rule or generalization obtained from outside the setting, no matter how much that importation may at first make the activities appear more recognizable, coherent or planful.

Since my study was small-scale, its argument may not be conclusive but thought-provoking. There are many educational regions and many schools in each of them. Each school may have its own ways of approaching literacy instruction. Here I have crafted an end to the story while knowing full well that the story continues beyond my involvement. There is thus a need to do more similar research studies in the country to broaden the base of the present study. This thesis has presented literacy learning as a social activity that took place at both school and in home settings. In these settings, the learners participated in literacy learning which I have identified as a social activity of a particular kind that takes place in the classroom and at home. The social interaction around the activity of reading and writing between teachers and the learners in the classroom and between parents/advanced siblings and their younger brothers and sisters at home were all leading to certain behaviors becoming identified as 'literacy learning' and thus roles were offered to the novice children to take up, as certain kinds of readers and writers. It is in situating of the act of reading and writing in its social context that practices involved in teaching reading and writing can be uncovered and praised or critiqued for the kind of readers and writers they produce. After Namibian independence, Namibian literacy classrooms were opened up to accommodate learners with unrelated backgrounds who stem from varied ethnic, language, racial, sociocultural and economic backgrounds. At the policy level, the state dictates what

counts as literacy by prescribing basic skills that are to be attained throughout the formal schooling years. Bayham and Prinsloo (2001, p. 88) have pointed out this dominant policy stand as follows:

> The understanding of literacy as a core basic skill that stands at the door to rational thinking, higher order skills and trainability is one that still dominates policy-making and system-building in educational provision across countries.

Despite the central government being in charge of the education system, it has recognized that literacy standards are low in the Namibian context. For example, the SACMEQ II Report (2004) has raised an educational concern as to why so many learners in Namibia cannot read for comprehension in Grade 6 and how to help them to overcome this deficiency. The SACMEQ II Report (2004, p. 155) argues that:

> If more than half of the Grade 6 learners in the three regions (Caprivi, Ohangwena, and Oshikoto) cannot read for comprehension, then there could be a serious problem with either their regional or home circumstances, or the way in which they are taught.

I contend that it is what people (the teachers, learners, parents and siblings) engage in, do together, why they do it, and how they do it, that will help to explain the types of readers and writers that we have in our school system today. It is this social practice that we need to critique in order to innovate new practices for individual success, should the current practices not deliver the expected results.

This study has revealed that the preschools and the primary schools that participated in the study valued overt instruction and engaged in explicit explanation of formal features of the language (e.g. sound-symbol system) with no emphasis on meaning making. Thus, in Windhoek urban settings the 'traditional' conception of literacy as a largely psychological ability – something to do with our intellect and therefore a private possession – remains dominant. Consequently, I am of the view that the preschool as well as the primary school literacy curriculum, which is packaged with knowledge of the alphabet, nursery rhymes, songs, print knowledge, rapid naming

of letters, visual memory and exercises in literal comprehension, needs an overhaul. Similarly, literacy activities that the learners participating in this study engaged in when doing their homework or literacy learning support activities at home that were school-like, emphasising print and conducted in a school-like fashion, using mostly materials that learners brought with them from school, such as worksheets and lists of words, need to be overhauled. This is because their homes also had a variety of electronic and digital sources that was used to build literacy. Children's involvement in these varied literacies speaks volumes about literacy learning at home being much more than paper-based code recognition. At home the children used various semiotic tools, including language, number systems, drawings, signs, hand-held devices, interactive computer games, and they were exposed to interactive cartoons, movies, video games and music, all of which contributed to their literacy development. They were manipulating these technological tools as they made sense to them; they provided them with a sense of enjoyment and as a way of staying in touch with others in their communities. The availability of such a variety of sources suggests that children are exposed very early in their lives to various literacy resources. Therefore, literacy learning begins long before children start school (Kantor, Miller & Fernie, 1992) and not only teachers and the learners share in literacy learning activities at the start of the preschool year.

Heath (1983) shows that the types of literacy experience children encounter differ according to families' social and cultural practices. As documented by Prinsloo (2013) and Prinsloo and Breier (1996), there are other literacies characterized as cultural resources which are not the same as school literacy, but which are in use, such as drawings, letter-writing, games, photography, visual formats, digital materials, keeping a diary, music, computer, play and drama, folklore, vernacular literacies, cultural resources, workers' literacies, local and social literacies. The communities with such cultural resources bring up their children and socialize them in these various literacies as their practice. Children learn what is important within the cultural communities in which they operate through interactions, guidance and participation with more experienced members of those cultures. It is by being socialized into and participating in such different literacy activities that individuals in communities acquire different literacies, even if they do not carry the same cultural capital as schooled literacy. Hence, what counts as literacy in home and community settings is the teaching and learning of literacy skills in locally available

literacies (which might include schooled literacy) so as to become competent and knowledgeable in their use in cultural contexts.

This study has shown that such literacy building activities at home exposed the children to a foundation on which to build further learning at schools. The study however also points out that these electronic and digital sources used at home did not feature much at school during literacy learning. This indicates that there was a need for the home and school to build and maintain bridges that would allow the children to bring and continue to use their 'cultural tools' in the classroom to enhance their literacy development. I am also of the view that, as Scribner and Cole (1981) have shown, some traditional societies in Namibia have literacy and literate individuals in them who never received their training in schools but who can read and write after having acquired these skills through apprenticeship as part of enculturation. Anning (2003, p. 8) states that as from birth children learn to be literate by 'responding to models of speech, reading and writing that surround them' in the communities where they grow up. They learn through everyday interactions with their siblings, peers, or significant adults around 'artefacts' such as television, magazines, catalogues and street and shop signs. These home literacy practices set the scene for further literacy development at school level. Cairney (2003) points out that families support literacy learning through joint activities, personal activities and ambient activities while they go about their everyday life.

The traditional view of literacy learning as a school-aged and school-based phenomenon has been challenged in literature and children came to be considered 'meaning makers' as from infancy within and across spoken and written language domains (Kantor et al., 1992; Teale & Sulzby, 1986). Therefore, literacy as such is not and cannot be solely the outcome of schooling (Cook-Gumperz, 1986), as it happens well before children's entrance into formal schooling. Moving from home to school places children at the crossroads; it is either the excitement with which children come to school and their personal (cultural) versions of literacy that is well-received and shaped at school, or the version of literacy on offer in the school is different and hostile to the children's earlier home literacy practices. In the case of Namibia, the school experience comes to be the new route to be traversed by the majority of learners with their familiar locally available literacies becoming undervalued and rapidly shaped into schooled

literacy versions. Hence, because of the discontinuity resulting from the home-school literacy mismatch, parents start to actively assist children to acquire the literacy practices that are valued by the school (Gillanders et al., 2004; Goldenberg et al., 1992; Serpel et al., 2005). Such literacy activities take place through direct instruction in completing workbooks and worksheets, taking dictation, writing numbers, writing the names of family members, reviewing homework, practicing letter-sound associations and reading basal readers to their children. The school sends most of these materials home in order to help the learners learn to read and write. At home most activities with print take on some characteristics of drill and practice and concentrate heavily on enhancing learning and mastering the orthographic code, with no attention being given to the meaning of the text. The parents, caregivers and siblings at home repeat schooled literacy in order to enhance learning to read and write, rather than engaging the children in informal literacy learning in culturally valued activities that are part of the family life and having a non-school purpose.

I have suggested that the 'new literacy pedagogy' is a promising approach to literacy learning in the Windhoek urban setting. By taking the position to study literacy learning as a sociocultural practice at school and at home, I have come to the conclusion that Namibia should endorse the sociocultural approach to literacy learning by way of a paradigm shift in order to allow for evolvement of a new definition that would contribute to enhanced teaching and learning of literacy in schools. This would allow teachers to explore ways of implementing literacy learning in its new broader definition in their classroom practice. Literacy learning and development come about as a result of active participation by the developing child in a setting that has literacy as its cultural tool. Various settings such as families, schools and other community institutions all use different technologies to make meaning over and above the written word. It is by studying the literacy learning activities taking place in the different settings of society that we can determine what counts as literacy in them and become familiar with the funds of knowledge that our learners bring to the classroom. There is thus a need to know and understand the culturally diverse literacies in families and communities if we are to develop a more responsive curriculum for both pre-and primary schools.

A central argument of this study is that there is a need to redefine what counts as literacy learning today in Windhoek urban settings. A broad range of skills, strategies, genres and contexts exists that must be considered in a complete literacy curriculum and a finite amount of time in which teachers have to teach it. By recognizing and accepting the different literacies in different environments (e.g. visual literacy, computer literacy, performative literacy, vernacular literacy etc.) and by taking something from each of these varied literacies into our school curriculum we can remix the cultural and social resources into a 'new literacy' for literacy learning and meaning making in the classroom. Such a move requires that we conduct extensive research in order to document the variable ways in which families use time, space and varied resources to help their children learn literacy. The different social and cultural groups will reveal their different literacy practices, and thus avail valuable information on children's early literacy development. By analyzing common literacy practices in the home, community and school settings, a relationship in terms of its purposes can be arrived at between them. It is by utilizing common literacy practices and their pedagogies from home that schools can meaningfully build on what their learners bring with them to the literacy learning classroom. Such an approach will ensure that learners are studying to become literate in an atmosphere or context that is not so hostile but one that they are familiar with and that the subject matter or the texts around which they develop their literacy are familiar as well.

I therefore call for mutual complementarity of what takes place at home with what happens at school and in classrooms. Literacy learnings that complement each other across the different settings can enrich and reinforce its learning. In my view, there remains work to be done to ensure that all learners achieve the highest levels of literacy in Namibia in general and in Windhoek urban schools in particular. In the classroom, literacy events take place through the medium of language and learners from homes that use a local language that is different from the language of the school end up having to learn a new language (Kennedy, 2006). Hence, literacy learning takes the form of learning a new language and its written language system. Two of my research children, *Tuvii* and *Ruben,* were in this situation of literacy learning while *Matthias* used English at home, which continued to be his medium of instruction at school. Tuvii and Ruben had to overcome this obstacle by achieving the basic competencies before focusing meaningfully on cultural learning, i.e. the subject-area learning. As pointed out by Ouane and Glanz (2010, p.

28), ‘teachers are expected to teach learners to read and write in a language which is unfamiliar to the learners and in which they (the teachers) have little competence themselves to teach’. Often teachers equate lack of adequate proficiency in the language of instruction with laziness, stubbornness and lack of intelligence or an uncooperative attitude on the part of the learners, while the actual problem is the lack of linguistic proficiency in the language of instruction. The teachers need to seek new ways in monolingual classrooms to honor and acknowledge their learners’ multilingualism. Teachers can switch between the official medium of instruction and the language that is most familiar to the learners in order to help them understand the subject matter. As pointed out by Garcia and Flores (2013), teachers can encourage children who are multilingual and pluriliterate to translanguage, i.e. to use all linguistic practices and modes as sense-making resources in order to engage with texts. They should also, as members of a pluriliterate society, not only draw from print to make sense of texts, but also rely on images, videos, music, drama, play and other technology-enriched signs. This will ensure that learners are apprenticed as members of pluriliterate social practices and learn it by being able to draw from all their language practices, while being immersed in reading and writing practices that include, but are not limited to, two or more standardized academic languages.

Different school subjects are culturally specific selections and in learning a subject one is also learning part of a culture. These selected parts of culture as covered in the school curriculum of the various school subjects can be organized in such a way so as to operate as a means of social control. That is, the selected part of culture might be from the dominant culture and those who do not share in it, will struggle with its meaning and interpretations. These culturally excluded individuals will simply participate in the dominant culture without transforming and producing it, becoming enslaved by it. This is why it remains important that schooling and education in general help and empower learners to reflect critically on what is being learned and taught in the classrooms by allowing them to become knowledge producers and meaning makers rather than knowledge consumers (Green, 1988).

As school literacy practices rely predominantly on the autonomous model of literacy; the contextual social factors and everyday life experiences of learners are not used as resources for literacy learning. Thus literacy is not taught in a context that is meaningful and used for

meaningful purpose, i.e. the content lacks authenticity. Therefore, schools should give pride to texts and other materials that their learners would consider as relevant and age-appropriate to read, to talk about, write about and share with their teachers, peers and even with parents at home. Learners should be allowed to articulate their independent thinking and to critically discuss texts in order to endorse the position taken by a text or presenting another position.

In Windhoek's urban school settings, the 'traditional' concept of literacy as a largely psychological ability – something true to do with our intellect, and thus a private possession – remains dominant. In support of the sociocultural approach to literacy, Scribner and Cole (1981) for example argue that 'literacy' is not simply knowing how to read and write a particular script (as some decontextualized ability) but applying this knowledge for specific purposes in specific contexts of use (whether in school, in the local community or as a member of a religious group). Cook-Gumperz (1986) and Rogoff (1995) discard the internalization perspective of literacy development which views literacy in terms of a static, bounded acquisition or transmission of pieces of knowledge for a participatory appropriation view which sees literacy development as a dynamic, active, mutual process involved in people's participation in cultural activities. The basic unit of analysis of the sociocultural approach is no longer the individual, but the socio-cultural activity of participation in the socially constructed practices (Prinsloo & Stein, 2004). Thus, literacy does not just provide the technical skill but also a set of prescriptions about using knowledge. Cook-Gumperz (1986, p. 1) argues that 'literacy is not just the simple ability to read and write, but by possessing and performing these skills we exercise socially approved and approvable talents; in other words, literacy is a socially constructed phenomenon'. Literacy practices, then, refer to 'the broader cultural conception of particular ways of thinking about and doing reading and writing in cultural contexts' (Street, 2003, p. 79).

I therefore argue that these studies and views should be looked at critically so as to influence literacy learning in Windhoek urban settings. Early literacy learning at preschool remains a matter of language learning, particularly because the child is being introduced to a second language that they do not have command over at the expense of their mother tongue, which can also be used as a medium of instruction. This places a burden on the child who has to learn a new

oral language and its culture, its written language system and how to read it, which for some learners takes up the lower primary phase and beyond to master.

I want to suggest that Namibia endorse the sociocultural approach to literacy learning by way of a paradigm shift in order to allow for literacy instruction to become a sense-making engagement, which is the ultimate goal of reading and writing. I argue for a balanced literacy curriculum, not the coordination of phonics and whole language components, but a flexible and artful orchestration of literacy's various contextual and conceptual aspects. The literacy learning curriculum, rather than being a copy of a model from somewhere, should be based on local content and contexts, and crafted on what is on offer in the various cultures in order for it be relevant. Literacy learning should equally be seen in terms of the three related dimensions: the operational, cultural and critical dimensions from its inception. Such a shift would allow for evolvement of a new definition that would contribute to enhanced teaching and learning of literacy in schools, which would enable teachers to explore ways of implementing literacy learning in its new broader definition in their classroom practices.

I will now highlight some caveats to literacy learning in line with the New Literacy Studies philosophy that could chart some directions, especially in relation to the future debates on how to harmonize literacy practices in school and at home.

Firstly, in the multilingual classroom settings that characterize the Windhoek urban setting, learners are not receiving their education through their mother tongue and no opportunities are created for multilingual children to creatively blend their home and school literacies to create unique hybrid texts (Dagenais et al., 2006). Even if learners are taught in a second language, English, it becomes important to recognize the multiple languages and literacies that they bring to the classroom. Rather than to deny the existence of these, it is important that teachers allow their learners to draw from their rich language and cultural resources during their early literacy learning. Code switching, for example, could be used as a valuable linguistic tool to facilitate or reinforce literacy learning, or to clarify a point being made during teaching to add completeness of understanding in the second language.

As this study shows, home literacy learning is strengthened by code switching between two languages. The use of English second language alone in the classroom denies the learners with other language backgrounds than English an opportunity to share their cultural and linguistic knowledge so as to display their identity as literate multilingual. There is a need for the various local languages to as far as possible be given a space in the classroom in order to serve as a bridge to school literacy. There is therefore also a need to deliberate on how the system can allow the learners to access their cultural and linguistic base to achieve this. Dagenais et al. (2006, p. 215) point out key features of supportive language and literacy classrooms as allowing for:

> Challenging and multifaceted tasks involving collaborative activity, various forms of participation so that learners can shift frequently between apprentice and expert roles, opportunities for all learners to contribute to the joint construction of knowledge and have access to desirable identity positions, and opportunities to draw on personal experience as well as a wide range of community resources.

Secondly, early literacy learning is important and will differ from one culture to another. Namibia, being a multicultural society, would require a cross-cultural approach to literacy learning. There is a need to gain a better understanding of the contexts in which young children become familiar with literacy in its various cultures. When such contexts are known, literacy learning at school can build on those experiences, or where that is not possible, schools can initiate the learners into the new cultural rules and language use of the school community by making the implicit assumptions of the school explicit, thereby allowing the learners to join in the school discourse community (Pransky & Bailey, 2002). In order to accommodate the cultural and linguistic diverse learners in the classrooms, teachers need to recognize that the learners' home and the school communicative ecology may differ. Learners therefore need to be empowered socially and academically in order to demonstrate their full potential with confidence. Heath (1983) advises educators to heed the notion that not all literacy experiences are celebrated in literacy curriculum manuals, therefore they must look with an equitable eye toward accommodating all literacy experiences which children bring to the school setting. Thus,

the learners' cultural environment should offer the texts that must be used during literacy instruction.

Barnitz (1994) points out those children who read texts that are not culturally familiar to them, often read slower, miscomprehend, have more irrelevant intrusions, and make fewer elaborations than those who read culturally familiar texts. This means that it is only fair that the content, the 'what' of the curriculum, should draw on indigenous, local forms of knowledge. When a school uses texts that contain stories directly related to the child's own world, their own experiences will contribute to reading and writing achievements. Texts that build on local content with which the children are familiar, allow the learners to use their prior knowledge of such contexts to discuss and interact with each other during literacy learning. Such talk about texts will allow the teacher to explain, model and scaffold the acquisition of the school language and discourse.

Thirdly, the teachers should acquaint themselves with their learners' ways with language in order to understand and appreciate their literacy repertoires, discourses, ways with words, rules for social interactions and sharing of knowledge, all which have roots in family life and childhood socialization. These need to be taken advantage of and teachers ought to incorporate their learners' domestic ways with language into how they teach literacy learning. Culican (1992) points out that success in schooling is likely to have more to do with the extent to which learners from less advantaged backgrounds have been inducted, or 'acculturated' into the particular discourses that take place around written texts, than with individual cognitive ability. Thus it remains important that classroom instructional patterns be aligned to the learners' home interaction patterns, or there should be a deliberate way in which to equip the learners with the knowledge resources needed to participate successfully in the literate discourses of schooling.

The control over topics and turn-taking during interrogation ought to be balanced between the participants in a classroom literacy learning setting. The classroom literacy events ought to have different patterns. The learners who are participating in literacy learning activities are from different cultural and language backgrounds. They have experienced varying discourse patterns in families, communities and cultures that might not necessarily be compatible to those appreciated by the classroom or in the school setting generally. Literacy learning in a classroom

setting should therefore aim to balance the topics to be shared, turn-taking, the classroom discourse, and the languages that are to be practiced if all participants are to be included to learn behaviors that become identified as literacy learning.

Fourthly, the multimodal nature of literacy that the children are exposed to early at home makes it a necessity for teachers to use multiple literacies when teaching their learners. The more teachers can use these literacies in their classroom, the more learners will be able to relate to their lives and activate their background knowledge. The absence of such a link for some of the learners can result in schoolwork being seen as detached from and irrelevant to their lives outside of school. Schools therefore need to widen the boundaries and the traditional notions of literacy as a paper-based activity and allow their learners to access text on computers, television and mobile phones (Marsh, 2004; Kress, 1997).

Fifthly, reading and writing instruction should use complete texts in communicative situations rather than teaching them as isolated drills of language. Gunning (2014) advises that to be effective, phonics instruction should be functional, useful, and contextual and differentiated, thus cautioning against the one-size-fits-all as though we teach only one child in our classroom. Research favors small-group, targeted instruction based on the learners needs, as not all learners may benefit from the same instructional approach. A balanced approach, which promotes skills instruction but in an authentic act of reading and writing, will ensure that towards the end of the day word recognition, reading fluency and comprehension are all part of literacy learning activities. While engaged in the act of reading and writing, the learner must therefore put the 'pieces' of reading and writing together in a holistic manner to give authenticity and goal to the act. Barnitz (1994, p. 590) points out that:

> Authenticity is a necessary condition for learners to be successful in developing literacy, but authenticity alone does not necessarily guarantee acquisition of literacy. Many learners will need specific language and literacy skills instruction, which can be embedded in authentic literacy activities.

I suggest that we re-look how we can empower our learners so that they become active participants who make their own decisions and negotiate their own learning process. Some of the methods in beginning reading and writing which uses the child's experiences that can be explored further for use in literacy learning include the language experience approach, which uses a short text which the learner has dictated to the teacher; the use of texts that contain stories directly related to the child's own world; the experience-text-relationship method, which uses discussion to link what the child already knows to what he/she will be reading about in the text; context support method, which uses books on topics that interest children and that they can relate to; the look and say method, where learners learn to recognize whole words or sentences rather than individual sounds; reciprocal teaching and other collaborative learning strategies.

What is now needed, is for teachers to be ready for different children, to appreciate, respect and work with what their children know, in order to ensure that they are active, critical and creative users of printed and visual formats of texts in their contemporary societies. As pointed out by Forzani and Leu (2017, p. 19):

> Literacy is not just new today; it becomes new every day of our lives. In other words, literacies, in today's context, are constantly evolving, posing a conundrum for theorists: How do you develop a theory of how a thing works, when the object that we study is continually changing?

We need to see these rapid changes as an opportunity and not a problem. We need to view teaching as an endeavor that addresses learners' needs rather than one in which a static set of skills is taught to static sets of learners. We need to move with the times and engage new ways in literacy learning that we could not consider previously. This study has shown that we need to view literacy through yet another lens, the new literacy perspective.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 01: Letter of Introduction to the Ministry of Education

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN SCHOOLS

Ministry of Education
P/Bag 13236
Windhoek

Director of Education
Khomas Education Region

RE: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN SCHOOLS

Dear Madam

I am a Namibian PhD D student at the University of Cape Town, RSA. I am writing to you to request permission from your good office to conduct a Longitudinal Research over a period of one year. Six months will be at three selected pre-schools in Windhoek where nine children and their parents as well as their teachers will be participating. This period is planned for June 2010 up to November 2010. These learners will be followed into their new Primary Schools where the study will continue for another six months. This period is planned for January 2011 up to June 2011. The parents, learners and their new Grade 1 teachers will be the subjects of the study. The working title of the research is: *What counts as literacy in Windhoek urban pre-and primary schools in Namibia?*

Please find attached a letter of registration as well as the ethical code that will direct the course of the study.

I trust that you will consider my request favorably and look forward to your positive response.

Yours sincerely

……..

Mr. Hengari, Job. U.

Lecturer: Department of Educational Psychology and Inclusive Education

Faculty of Education

University of Namibia

APPENDIX 02: Letter to Parents

Dear Parent,

Subject: Request for consent

My name is Mr. Job Hengari. Currently I am a lecturer at the University of Namibia and also doing a PhD degree with the University of Cape Town in South Africa, through distance education. In order to complete this degree, I am required to conduct a research within my field of study. The title of my research is: *What counts as literacy in Windhoek urban pre-and primary schools in Namibia?*

I am writing this letter to **(a)** inform you that ……. (your child) was identified as a possible participant in this research study on early literacy learning; and **(b)** to request your consent of allowing ……. to participate in this longitudinal study over a period of one year. The research will be done in two phases:

Phase 1: From June 2010 to December 2010, the child, the parent and the preschool teacher of early literacy will participate in the research.

Phase 2: From January 2011 to June 2011, the child, the parent and the grade 1 teacher of literacy will participate in the research.

To this end, I have attached **(a)** a letter of registration and ethical code that will direct the course of the study; **(b)** a consent note from the Acting Director of Khomas Education Region; and **(c)** a consent note from the principal of the school where ……. attends.

I trust that you will consider my request favorably and look forward to your positive response.

Yours sincerely

……..

Mr. Hengari, Job. U.
Lecturer: Department of Educational Psychology and Inclusive Education
University of Namibia

Note of consent

Dear Mr. Job Hengari

I ……. the parent of …….. have considered your request and herewith give consent to allow …… to participate in your study as per your request.

Signature …….

Date: ……

NB: Please return the signed slip with your child to the pre-school.

APPENDIX 03: Parent's Approval Note fo Child to Continue Participating in the Study (Primary School)

Dear Principal,

I am writing this letter to (a) inform you that ……..(child's name) who is currently enrolled at your school for Grade 1, participated in a study on early literacy learning during preschool phase; and (b) herewith give my consent to allow ……. to continue participating during phase two of this study which is scheduled from January 2011 up to June 2011.

Phase 1: From June 2010 to December 2010, the child, the parent and the preschool teacher of early literacy participated in the research.

Phase 2: From January 2011 to June 2011, the child, the parent and the grade 1 teacher of literacy will participate in the research.

Yours sincerely

Name and Surname of Parent ……

Signature …….
Date: ……

APPENDIX 04: Letter of Introduction to the Principal (Primary School)

The Principal
P.O. Box ……
Windhoek

Dear Sir/Madam,

Subject: Request for permission to conduct research at your school

My name is Mr. Job Hengari. Currently, I am a lecturer at the University of Namibia and also doing a PhD degree with the University of Cape Town in South Africa, via distance education. In order to complete this degree, I am required to conduct a research within my field of study. The title of my research is: *What counts as literacy in Windhoek urban pre-and primary schools in Namibia?*

I am writing this letter to **(a)** inform you that ……. (name of child) participated in a longitudinal research study on early literacy learning that started in June 2010; and that **(b)** the study is following this learner's literacy learning into Grade 1 for a period of six months; and **(c)** to request your consent of allowing the learner and your Grade 1 teacher to continue to participate in this longitudinal study. The research is conducted in two phases:

Phase 1: From June 2010 to December 2010, the child, the parent and the preschool teacher of early literacy participated in the research.

Phase 2: From January 2011 to June 2011, the child, the parent and the grade 1 teacher of literacy will participate in the research.

To this end, I have attached **(a)** a letter of registration and ethical code that will direct the course of the study; **(b)** a consent note from the Acting Director of Khomas Education Region; and **(c)** a consent note from the parents of the participating learner.

I trust that you will consider my request favorably and look forward to your positive response.

Yours sincerely

……..

Mr. Hengari, Job. U.
Lecturer: Department of Educational Psychology and Inclusive Education
University of Namibia