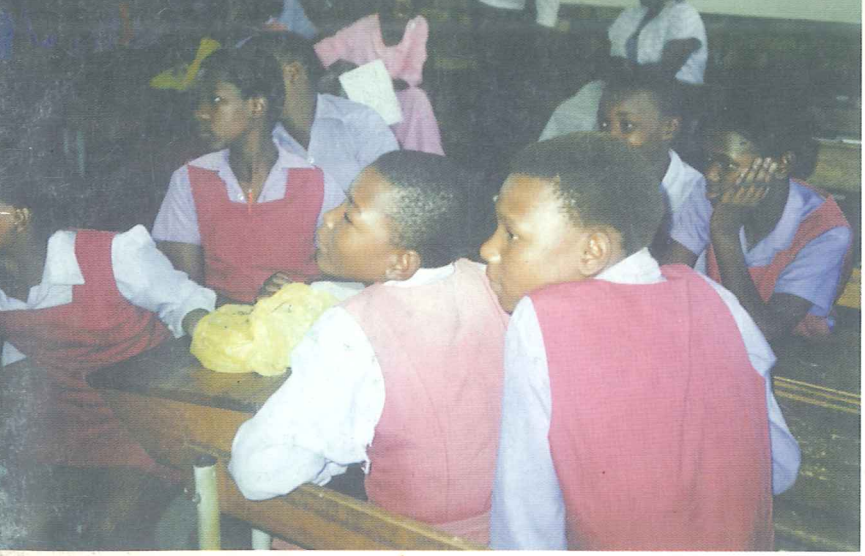

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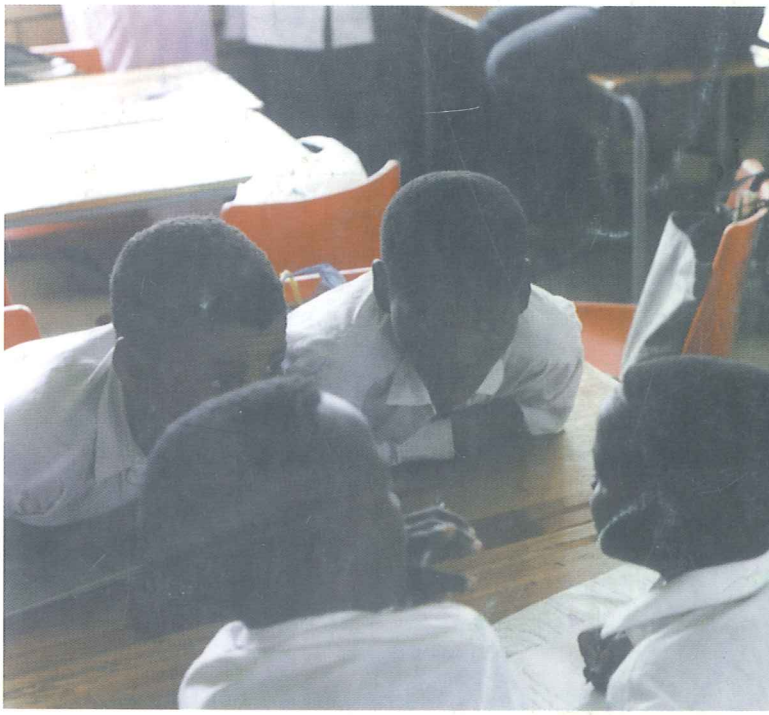
Eastern Cape Education Department

Distance Education Project

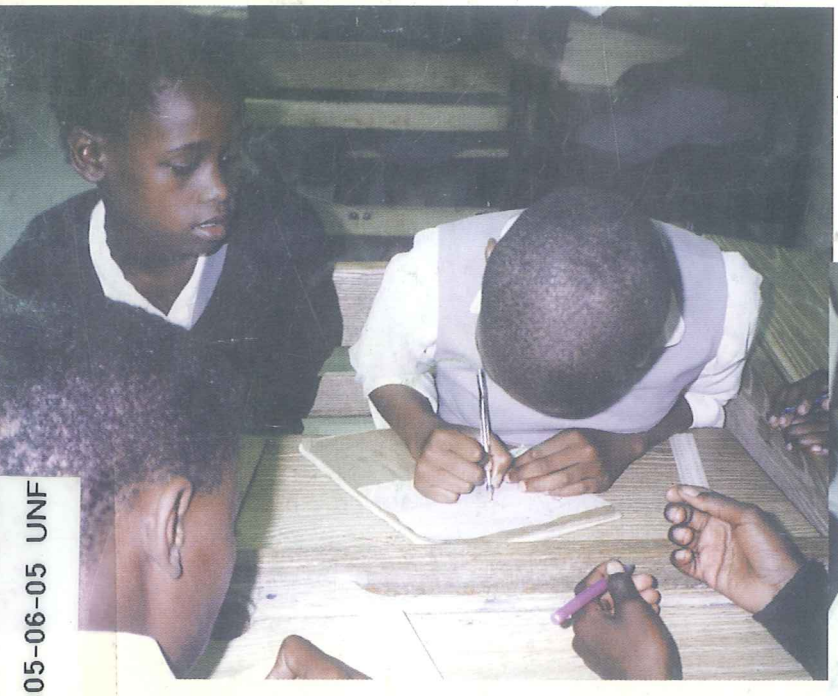


Core Learning Areas Course

Language, Literacy and Communication

Umthamo 2

A Whole Language Approach



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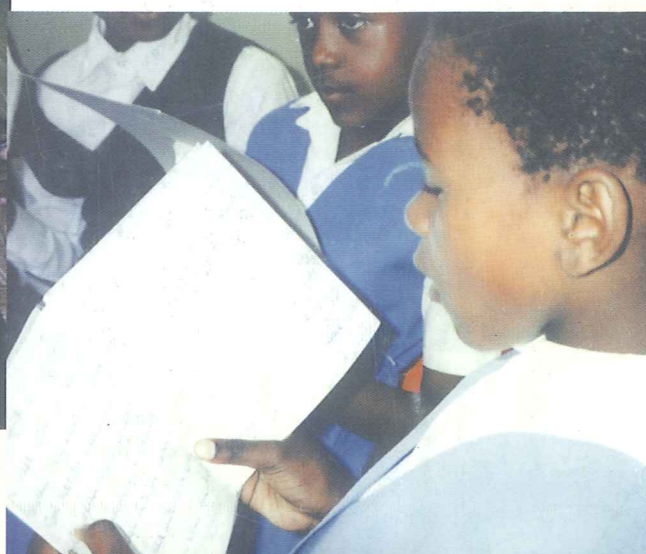

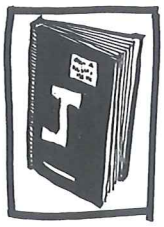

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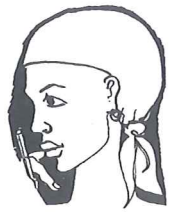
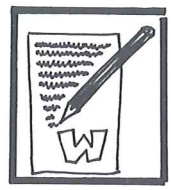


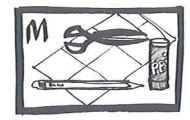
Thinking and Reflecting



Written Report

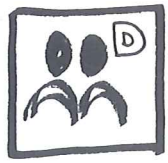
Classroom or School

Key Activity



Making materials

Reading and Thinking



Discussion

Face-to-face umkhwezeli

Concertina File for Portfolio

Time

When something unexpected happens, or our plans go astray, we reflect on our actions and on our thoughts. 'Whatever made me do that? What was I thinking about?' Then we seem to be attending to a kind of inner speech, the dialogue we have with ourselves in our heads.

Reading and writing contribute to some aspects of these kinds of thinking: going back over things, wondering why they are as they are, planning, revising, revisiting. Even when what we are reading is a story of events that could never happen to us, we treat the plot as a series of possibilities. We say we imagine what is happening. When we write a letter to explain a set of complicated circumstances we are having a kind of imaginary talk with the reader, surmising the reactions to what we set down. Almost as soon as we learned to read and write we became used to the dialogue of the imagination that always accompanies these activities.

.....To read is to think about meaning; to write is to make thinking visible as language. To do both is to learn to be both the teller and the told in the dialogue of the imagination.

[Margaret Meek: ***On Being Literate*** *- 1991]*

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CONTENTS

Umthamo 2

A Whole Language Approach

Introduction

In this umthamo, we are going to look at a way of teaching language which fits in with Outcomes Based Education (OBE). It is not such a 'new' way, but it may be new to some teachers, and to some primary schools in South Africa.

*There are different approaches to teaching and learning. Many colleges of education tend to teach just **one**.*

This approach to language learning and teaching does not divide language into different parts. It is about the links between ***all*** aspects of language. The ideas and activities in this umthamo combine a **whole language** approach with a **literature-based** approach to language teaching and learning.

Many people assume that the word 'literature' refers to stories, poems and plays that have been written down. But this is not true. It has been said that it is 'an accident' that we have come to think of literature in this way. *Literature* includes both the art of speaking, and the art of writing.

> *In 'civilised' countries we are inclined to associate literature with writing; but such an association is accidental ... Millions of people throughout Asia, Polynesia, Africa and even Europe, who practise the art of literature, have no knowledge of letters. Writing is unessential to either the composition, or the preservation, of literature. (Chadwick, NK 1939:77 quoted in Finnegan 1970:15-16)*

In this umthamo we are concerned with *oral literature*. We will ask you to collect samples of *oral literature*. You will use these iintsomi as a base for the *whole language* work that you do with your learners.

In high schools it has been the custom for some time to separate subjects. Sadly, this has filtered down into the primary school. So much so, that in some schools even aspects of one subject (or learning area) are divided into separate parts.

We suggest that this is unnatural. It is high time that we caught up with other parts of the world (our 'global village'), and adopted a whole language approach in our interactions with young learners.

At the face-to-face session **where this umthamo is introduced**, you will experience a 'whole language' approach yourself (see Unit 3). We believe this is important if you are to understand how this approach works, and if you are to see the value of working in this way.

For the **Key Activity** in this umthamo, we are going to ask you to try out a 'whole language' approach with your class. We think that this approach to language teaching will make your language lessons more meaningful and more interesting, for both you and for your pupils.

At the face-to-face session **where this umthamo is monitored**, you will have to report on your experiences carrying out Part 1 of the **Key Activity**. So you will need to make sure that you have completed Activity 7 *before* that face-to-face session.

At the face-to-face session **where this umthamo is concluded**, you will be expected to report on your experiences, and those of your learners, in Part 2 of the **Key Activity.**

Intended outcomes

When you have completed this umthamo you will

- **be more conscious of how your teaching approach in the classroom affects the way your children learn and *feel* about language**
- **have tried a 'whole language approach' in your class, and you will be able to compare this with the way you have been teaching language up to this point**
- **be able to design and provide tasks for your pupils that integrate listening, speaking, thinking, reading and writing**
- **have an understanding of the value of providing activities that require your pupils to access, process, use and share information from various sources**
- **have had opportunities to see the value of using culture based experiences such as iintsomi, at school.**

Zozo Figlan telling a story in 1992 at the Weekly Mail Storytellers' Market in Cape Town.

Unit 1 - The Role of Timetables in Primary Classrooms

Most primary school teachers in South Africa have been used to having a daily timetable. A timetable can help us to make sure that we make time to teach all the subjects in the curriculum. It can help us to ensure that we allow enough time for each area of the curriculum.

Before we do anything else, we would like you to think about your own class and your own school. Think about what you have to do from Monday to Friday with your class, and then do the next activity.

Activity 1 - Looking at Timetables

Take a piece of A4 paper and draw your class timetable. Put in all the subjects and periods that your class have. If you have a lesson or period devoted just to reading, please write that in. If you have a particular period for spelling, put that in, too. If you have a whole hour or more devoted to language, please show that. Please draw your timetable ***exactly*** as it is in your class.

Make sure that you print your name and the grade that you teach at the bottom of your timetable.

- Now look at the timetables below. Compare your own timetable with these. What do you notice?
- Which timetable is most similar to your own? In what ways?
- In what ways is your timetable different?

Sometimes we can guess the way a teacher *works* from things we see in her/his classroom. Do these timetables tell you anything about the style of teaching that goes on in each of these classes? What clues do you see? What helps you work out each teacher's way of working?

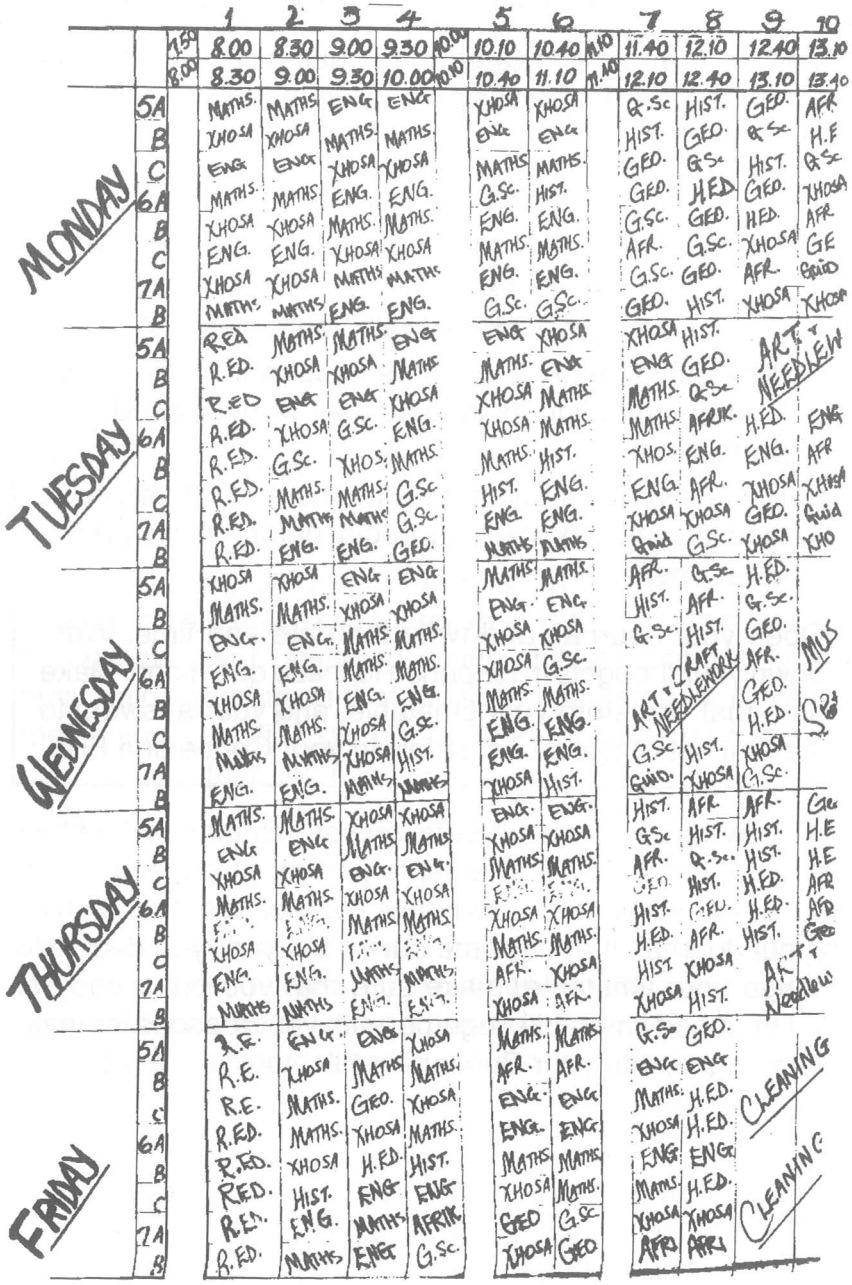
GRADE 1 TIME TABLE

TIME	7:50 8:00	8:00 8:30	8:30 9:00	9:00 9:30	9:30 10:00	10:00 10:30	10:30 11:00	11:00 11:30	11:30 12:00	12:00 12:30	12:30 13:00	13:00 13:30
MINUTES	10	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30
MONDAY	ASSEMBLY AND DEVOT	LITERACY ENG	LITERACY ENG	NUMERACY	NUMERACY	NUMERACY	BREAK	LITERACY XHOSA	LITERACY XHOSA	LITERACY XHOSA	LIFE SKILL	LIFE SKILL
TUESDAY		NUMERACY	NUMERACY	NUMERACY	LITERACY XHOSA	LITERACY XHOSA		LIFE SKILL	LIFE SKILL	LIFE SKILL	LITERACY ENG	LITERACY ENG
WEDNESDAY		LITERACY XHOSA	LITERACY XHOSA	LITERACY XHOSA	LIFE SKILL	LIFE SKILL		LITERACY ENG	LITERACY ENG	NUMERACY	NUMERACY	NUMERACY
THURSDAY		LIFE SKILL	LIFE SKILL	LITERACY ENG	LITERACY ENG	NUMERACY	LONG	NUMERACY	NUMERACY	LITERACY XHOSA	LITERACY XHOSA	LITERACY XHOSA
FRIDAY		LITERACY ENG	LITERACY ENG	NUMERACY	NUMERACY	NUMERACY		LITERACY XHOSA	LITERACY XHOSA	LITERACY XHOSA	LIFE SKILL	LIFE SKILL

This is a time-table from a Grade 4 class in 1998

Period	1	2	3	4	5	6		7	8	9	10
Time	8:00-8:30	8:30-9:00	9:00-9:30	9:30-10:00	10:00-10:30	10:30-11:00	11:00-11:30	11:30-12:00	12:00-12:30	12:30-13:00	13:00-13:30
Mon	R Ed	Math	Math	Xhosa Oral C	Xhosa Writ C	Afrik		Eng Oral L	Eng Writ L	Art & Craft	Art & Craft
Tues	Math	Math	Eng Oral C	Eng Writ C	Xhosa Oral L	Xhosa Writ L		Geog	Geog	Afrik M T	Art & Craft
Wed	Math	Math	Hist	Hist	Phys	Ed		Eng Read	Eng Spell	Xhosa Read	Xhosa Spell
Thur	Math	Math	Xhosa Oral L	Xhosa Writ L	Gen Sci	Gen Sci		Eng Oral L	Eng Writ L	Gard-	ening
Fri	R Ed	Math	Math	Eng Rec	Eng Rec	Health		Xhosa Rec	Xhosa Rec	Afrik	Option Time

Grade 5, 6 & 7 Timetable



Now take another clean sheet of paper, and write the date and time. Then write down your thoughts and answers to the questions that we asked you above. (We have repeated them below.)

- Compare your own timetable with these timetables. What do you notice?
- Which timetable is most similar to your own? In what ways?
- In what ways is your timetable different?

Sometimes we can guess the way a teacher *works* from things we see in her/his classroom. Do these timetables tell you anything about the style of teaching that goes on in each of these classes? What clues do you see? What helps you work out each teacher's way of working?

When you have answered these questions, attach this sheet securely to the copy you have made of your timetable.

Now stop and think about the questions below:

- Do you think timetables are important in a primary school classroom? Why?
- Do you ever get frustrated with your timetable? Why?
- Why do you think it might be important to allow your learners to spend as long as they want or need on a particular task?
- How do you feel about the statement, "Children need to finish any task that they begin, before they start another one"?

Open your Journal, and write the date and time. Write down your thoughts in response to these questions. Make sure that you store your timetable, and your answers to the first set of questions, safely in your Concertina File.

You now have a copy of your present timetable, together with your comments, stored safely in your Concertina File. You have also written down how you feel about timetables in your Journal. If at any time during the year you decide to change your timetable, make sure that you put a copy of your changed timetable, together with your reasons for making changes, into your Concertina File, too.

Problematising Timetables

When we divide up each day into lessons or periods, we usually end up separating learning areas. We can even be so concerned that we cover all aspects of each learning area, that we even make special times for each separate part of a particular learning area. This can cause us to forget that the curriculum should be one whole. And "the whole, is more than the sum of the parts".

In the early 1990s, in Mitchell's Plain in the Western Cape, there were schools where there was subject teaching from Standard 2 (Grade 4) onwards. Language lessons were divided in such a way that one lesson focused on reading, while another was devoted to spelling. Yet another lesson was for grammar, and another for writing. And there was yet another lesson to deal with poetry or stories.

There were even Grade 4 classes where one teacher walked into the classroom to teach Comprehension, and another came into teach Grammar or Language. Each teacher was a specialist of a particular aspect of language. One teacher was not expected to put all the aspects (or parts) of language together. And yet that was what the children were forced to do in those schools. The pupils had to listen to what each teacher had to say, and then they had to somehow try to put all the different parts together. It was rather like a jigsaw puzzle.

Why did these schools do this? What was the reasoning, philosophy, or theory of education behind this way of working? Was it based on the notion (held by some educationists) that young children have an attention span of just ten minutes? If so, how valid (or reliable) is this notion or belief? If you have ever observed young children when they are busy doing something that they are interested in, or which they enjoy, you will have noticed that their attention span is *much* longer than ten minutes!

When Alan worked at the University of Cape Town in the School of Education, he taught a B Ed course. One of his B Ed students was doing some action research into his own teaching. This student was a lecturer at a college for Pre-primary teacher trainees. He had been reflecting on and thinking about his style of lecturing. In the course of his research, this B Ed student had asked his own students how they found his lectures. Amongst the responses that this man recorded was one which stands out.

"Sir, another thing is, that you just come in and teach us your subject. But you must know, Sir, we've got a lot of other subjects to consider. Each lecturer just teaches his lesson

and when it is all finish (sic), we must take all the little bits and put it together. They don't tell us how we must do it. I don't think it's fair!" (Quoted in a report submitted by a B Ed student - UCT 1991)

Activity 2 - Putting it all together

At this point, we want you to think very carefully about this story. Is this really fair? Should the ***learners*** be the ones who 'have to put it all together'? Or should that be the role of the one who is sharing their knowledge or expertise, the ***teacher***? Or, should the ***learners*** do this **together** with the ***teacher*** as the facilator?

Open your Journal. Write the date and time. Then write down your thoughts about this in your Journal. Take some time. Don't just write one or two sentences. If a primary school teacher teaches in a school that seems to ***insist*** on timetables, what do you think s/he could do to get the other teachers, heads of department and the principal to begin to open up the timetables?

Has primary education been influenced so much by high school education, that teachers have come to believe that it is better to separate everything out, just as in high schools, and to specialise?

In the past, when people trained to teach in a primary school, they were trained to teach *everything*. The teachers were generalists. Their *specialism* was being able to cover all areas of the primary school curriculum. These teachers didn't focus on two or three subjects or areas of the curriculum. They were able to cover the *whole* curriculum.

It is only since the early 1980s that students who wanted to teach learners from Grade 4 to Grade 7, have followed specialist subject courses. Why was this the case? We believe that primary schools have been influenced by secondary or high schools.

Historically, teachers in high schools have received the most respect. The teachers who taught at the top of the primary school had less respect. And the teachers who taught the first grades, had the least respect.

But how many of the teachers who taught in high schools could have managed to teach in a Grade 1 or Grade 2 classroom? Very few. It takes a very special, multi-talented somebody to teach the youngest learners. We know of many *primary* school teachers who have successfully taught in high schools. But we know of very few *high* school teachers who have managed to teach in primary schools!

So why have we, as primary school educationists, emulated (copied) the way that high schools are organised? Perhaps education would be more successful if high schools modelled themselves on the way primary schools are organised. Is it because the majority of officials and education decision-makers come from secondary schools?

In 1997 Viv had the opportunity to go to the United States of America. She learned that many *high* schools were beginning to open up their timetables. The teachers at those schools were trying to make more space for their learners to learn for themselves, and to make their learners' experiences in school more meaningful. They decided to make each period one hour long. This meant that the teachers had to change their approach to teaching in their classes. They couldn't stand at the front of the class for a whole hour *lecturing* the children. The teachers had to plan activities for their learners to do.

Perhaps a primary school teacher in South Africa, who is forced to teach within a strict timetable, could borrow this idea. Perhaps, it would be a good way to start: to make each period one hour long, instead of 30 minutes. Probably it would be easier if s/he could find a colleague who feels the same way. Then they could approach their head of department and their Principal to see if they could try out something like this in their classes. This would be one way in which education in our schools could become more learner-centred, and less teacher-centred.

If you look back to the Grade 1 timetable on page 4, you will see that in this class, the teacher is not restricted by 30 minute periods. Most periods are one hour, and others are an hour and a half. This is in line with OBE.

Later on you could try to block certain longer periods of time. For example, between break and the end of the day. You could do this gradually, starting with one 2 hour block in a week. If it works well, you could increase the number of longer blocks of time in the week. This would enable you to deal with something more thoroughly. This is what happens in many primary schools elsewhere in the world.

Unit 2 - Moving towards an integrated Curriculum

When Tillie was in South Australia in September 1998, she was very impressed by the way the teachers of learners in Grades 1 to 7 integrated the different learning areas. She visited a number of primary schools and spoke to the teachers who worked in those schools.

Tillie was impressed by the way the teachers and learners worked in those primary schools. In some schools Tillie found that much of the work that learners did was ***project-based***. In other words, the children worked on a particular topic to find out all that they could, and then they reported on their findings. Tillie was very impressed by how well the learners did this.

In some cases, the *learners* chose the topic they would research. In other cases, the learners went out into their community to ask what the *community* would like them to investigate.

But, no matter what topic a group of learners chose, it inevitably involved a number of learning areas, if not all. For example, they counted and calculated, read history, used computers, learned about environmental needs, drew and designed, and so on. And of course, they used language, literacy and communication skills! They ***thought***, they ***spoke***, they ***listened*** to one another, they ***read***, and they ***wrote*** down, or recorded, what they had had learned.

Another thing that really impressed Tillie was that the learners were required to work in 'multi-grade' groups. Children from all grades, from the Reception Class to Grade 7, could be found working in the same group. They even formed these mixed groups themselves. Everybody in the group was given a chance to participate. The young ones worked under the eye of the older children.

At the conference that Tillie and Alan and John Bartlett attended in Adelaide, some children from Colonel Light Gardens Primary School presented what they had done in a Technology Education focused project.

It was clear from their presentation, that these learners had encountered some disagreements when they started out on their project. They explained how they had overcome these disagreements, and wove a lot of humour into their explanation. They seemed to have picked up the idea that people may disagree for some good reasons. And they were proud of the ways they had managed to solve their differences with everybody happy with the solution.

In everything that these learners did, they needed to use communication skills. And as they used their communication skills, the learners learned a great deal. For example,

- Their communication skills were tremendously improved. They noticed people who were in a hurry and those who did not wish to be disturbed, or who were worried, or who looked hurt. For example, they came to a lady in the park whom they noticed was deeply hurt by something, and they decided not to approach her (*non-verbal communication*). In the early morning, people are in more of a rush than by mid-morning. Elderly people seem to have more time than the young and the middle-aged.
- They learned to ***speak*** in a group.
- They learned how to handle and guide a discussion with confidence.
- The shy ones came out of their shells.
- They learned how to approach other people when carrying out their research. (For example, "Good day. May I ask something for my school research? Which sweet do you like?")
- The learners had to ***listen*** constantly as they collected their information (data).
- They ***read*** a lot, for extra information (from newspapers and magazines to library books).
- Their language was extended and developed in a "*real*" context. They learned the correct use of new words and all the parts of speech that go with them.
- The answers and added information were recorded (***writing***). If a learner could not spell a word, the respondent did the writing or spelt the word. The learner could even write the information as s/he pronounced it, ignoring the conventional spelling. When back in her/his group, any necessary corrections could be made with the help of the other group members.
- They learned about how to arrange and record their work.
- Through carrying out project work, the learners' sense of responsibility was tremendously improved.
- They learned to understand themselves (their likes, dislikes, strengths, weaknesses).
- Their self-esteem was boosted.
- They felt they belonged to their community and that they could be of help in the future.

Now think of yourself. You probably have lots of different jobs or roles to play. Maybe you are a mother, a wife, and a housekeeper, as well as a teacher. Maybe you also have certain other jobs that you do in your community. You aren't four or five different people. And often the other 'unofficial' jobs that you do, help you to do your job as a teacher even better. We sometimes have regular times to do certain things. But we don't have a rigid timetable for the jobs that we do in daily life.

Activity 3 - All the different jobs I do

Take out your Journal, write the date and time. Then make a list of all your 'jobs', including your 'official' job of being a teacher. What helps you to do your job as a teacher well? Why? Do you find your timetable helps you to plan and get through all the different syllabi? Why? What stops you from finishing a task with your class? In what ways? Write down your thoughts in answer to these questions.

If we want our children to grow up into truly ***whole*** human beings, we should think about whether this fragmented (broken up) curriculum is a good way to help them to be *whole*. Perhaps it would be better to integrate the different *aspects* of learning areas, as well as integrating different learning areas.

We remember talking to Hugh Hawes a few years ago. He was at a special workshop in Cape Town on the Child-to-Child approach to Health Education. Lots of different people were there. There were people from Early Childhood. There were people from Health Departments. There were doctors and teachers, community workers and people from youth organisations.

Hugh Hawes is we known for his book "Cu riculum and Reality in A rican Primary School (1979)

Hugh Hawes said that a good question to ask about any Primary Curriculum is, "Does it ***nourish*** the child's growing mind?" That led to other interesting questions.

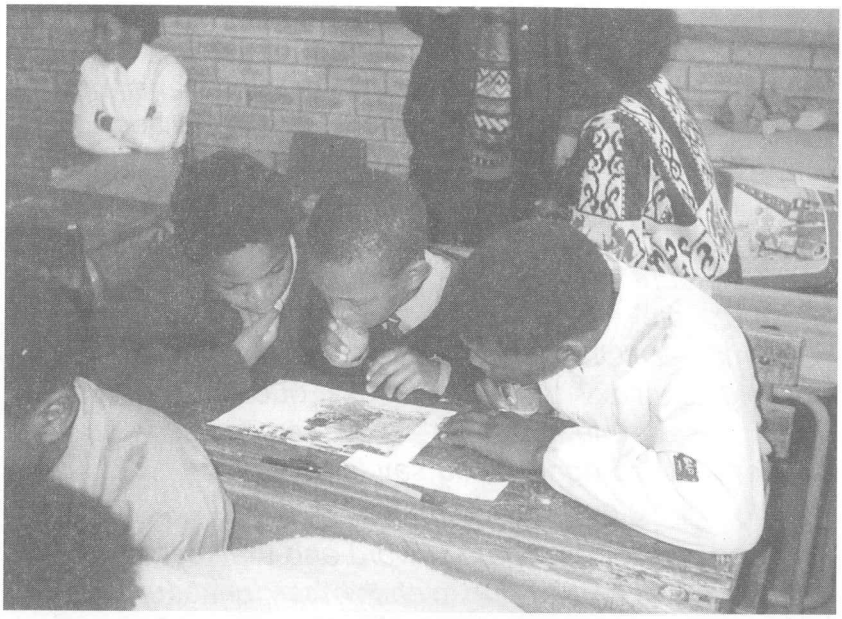
- Is it a balanced diet?
- Does it contain the right amount of the right kinds of knowledge and the right balance of experiences?
- Is it appetising?
- Is it served up in an interesting and enticing way?

If you think carefully about what he was saying, it means that to serve nourishing food, you have to think of putting together interesting meals, made up of a number of different ingredients.

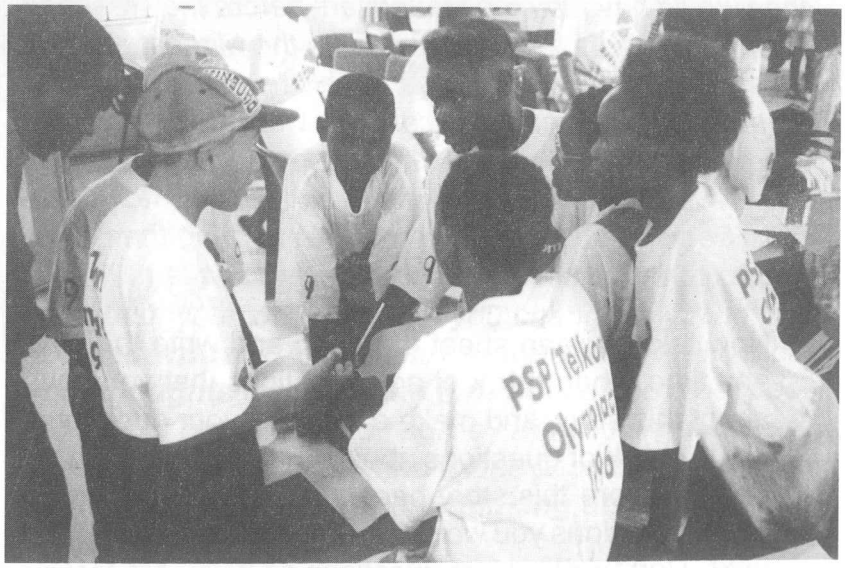
Perhaps we need to think of the school curriculum in the same way. Putting things together helps make for more sen-

sible learning. And when we put things *together*, it makes it easier for children to make sense of what they find put in front of them in school classrooms. One really wonders why we split up the school day into all those neat little 30 minute periods?

People don't feed their families meals as separate items, such as, first eat some dry porridge, then have a small bowl of amasi, then swallow a pinch of salt. Now take a slice of bread, followed by a spoon of butter, and then a spoon of jam. Then finish off with a cup of hot boiled water, followed by a spoon of coffee grains, and finally, two heaped spoons of sugar. (No need to stir!)



Working together to interpret a picture



Working together on a project

Unit 3 - Experiencing a Whole Language Approach

In this unit we are going to start by giving you something to do. As you carry out the activity, you will see that you are ***reading, thinking, writing, speaking and listening.*** You will see that this activity involves all of these five abilities, in different ways, at different stages.

You will do this activity a the face-to-face sessio where this umthamo is in troduced.

Activity 4 - A literature-based whole language experience

When Tillie was trying to recover the story behind an idiom, she heard Steve Tshwete telling this version of the story. Read the beginning of the story that he told. It is *only* the beginning.

A certain master was on a journey with his servant. It was a long journey on horse-back. As they were travelling across the country, the master saw a jackal crossing their path. The master remarked, "This jackal is quite big." The servant replied, "Oh, Master, this is nothing compared to the one I saw yesterday." "Is that so?" responded the master. "Oh yes. It was very, very big. In fact it was as big as an ox!" "As big as an ox?" questioned the master. "Yes, as big as an ox," answered the servant. The master asked again, "You say 'as big as an ox'?" "Yes, really, as big as an ox," said the servant.

The master did not utter a word and they continued on their way, without talking to each other, for about an hour. The servant noticed that his master was not happy and he didn't know what was worrying him. So he asked the master what the matter was. The master told him that they would have to cross four rivers before they reached their destination. The last river was the biggest and the most dangerous of all the rivers. This river was allergic to liars, and no liar could escape its wrath. It swept liars there and then down to the deep blue sea. It never missed a liar, even if the liar was to use "umkhwenkwe" for washing. (People used this umkhwenkwe to bring them luck, and to give them power to conquer evil spirits.)

- Now take a clean sheet of paper, and write the date and time. Then **think** of any questions that you have about this story, and make a list of all your questions. Try to **think** of questions about what might have happened before this story began. You could also **write** down questions you would like to **ask** about happened next. *Don't* **write** down questions as if you are testing

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