

## Critical literacy in South Africa: Possibilities and constraints in 2002

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*ABSTRACT: This article examines the Curriculum documents produced in South Africa since the election of a democratic government in 1994 in order to consider the possibilities they create for the inclusion of critical literacy in the teaching of home languages. This discussion is set against an analysis of the apartheid curriculum documents prior to 1994 and a consideration of the ongoing inequalities in the provision of human and material resources across the system. Despite real constraints with regard to implementation, it is argued that the new Curriculum effects a significant break with the past and makes a positive contribution to transforming language education.*

*KEYWORDS: critical literacy, literacy, curriculum development, language education, South Africa, education*

Since independence in 1994, South Africa has a single national Department of Education (DE) and integrated provincial departments that are accountable to it. The nine provincial departments now include the departments of the former so-called homelands, many of which were the main providers of rural education, as well as the separate education departments formerly organised in terms of race. While the government's policy of redress continues to effect change, forty-five years of unequal distribution of material and human resources as well as separate curricula and examinations have created huge disparities. This legacy is referred to as "historical advantage" and "historical disadvantage".

The terms are used to refer to both institutions – historically advantaged or disadvantaged universities and schools – and the students who attended them. Historically disadvantaged students, therefore, are students who attended poorly resourced schools with less qualified teachers; who studied through the medium of a language that was not their own; and who were examined in terms of a curriculum that expected less of its learners. The terminology is problematic: a student at the University of the Witwatersrand who was nearing completion of his degree asked if one could ever escape the label<sup>1</sup>. Is it possible to overcome one's history? How many degrees would it take? With regard to institutions, apartheid produced different material conditions for different communities. These remain: well-resourced schools are still better resourced than their historically under-developed counterparts. The history of disadvantage is not yet history. It continues, as does historical advantage.

Prior to independence the curricula and matriculation examinations across the education departments were different. For her doctoral research, Jeanne Prinsloo

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<sup>1</sup> Personal communication with the Dean of the Faculty of Humanities

undertook a genealogical study of three of the home language curricula<sup>2</sup>, from 1960 to 1994, in kwaZulu-Natal, one of the nine provinces. She examined the home language curricular documents for English, Afrikaans and isiZulu, in order to understand why her present Bachelor of Education students were differently disposed to critical literacy. Her research shows how technologies of self are employed in each of these languages to produce different subjectivities; it enables us to understand *how* advantage and disadvantage are produced. Because of its close attention to the detail of syllabus documents and examination papers in these three languages, and the comparative nature of her study, Prinsloo is able to show, in concrete terms, the different requirements each of these languages imposes on teachers and learners and the different subject positions that each makes available for learners to take up. We elaborate on this in the next section. .

Under apartheid, ... [the] education system prepared children differently for the positions they were expected to occupy in social, economic and political life under apartheid. The curriculum played a powerful role in reinforcing inequality. What, how and whether children were taught differed according to the roles<sup>3</sup> they were expected to play in the wider society (Department of Education, 2002, p. 4).

Given the structural inequalities in education, with devastating effects for its citizens as individuals and for the development of the country's overall human capacity, there was pressure on the new government to transform education as an urgent priority. In 1996, the South African Qualifications Authority Act (Act No. 58 of 1995) approved the establishment of a single, integrated, outcomes-based National Qualifications Framework and the State embarked on a process of curriculum re-visioning that would effect a significant break with the past. *Curriculum 2005 (C2005)*, an outcomes-based curriculum for General Education (R to Grade 9) was approved in 1997 and phased implementation began in 1998. In November 1998, the new Minister of Education, Kadar Asmal, appointed a committee to review *C2005*. The committee recognised the importance of *C2005*

Curriculum 2005 is probably the most significant curriculum reform in South African education in the last century. Deliberately intended to simultaneously overturn the legacy of apartheid education and catapult South Africa into the 21st Century, it was an innovation both bold and revolutionary in the magnitude of its conception (Review Committee Report, 2000, p.1).

Nevertheless the Review Committee recommended that the *C2005* be revised because in many ways the system did not have the capacity to deliver what was an overly complex vision. The *Revised National Curriculum Statement* published in 2002,

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<sup>2</sup> This terminology is in flux. In the 1960-1994 curriculum documents "first language" is used to refer to one's home language or mother tongue and "second language" and "third language" to additional languages studied. To matriculate, all South Africans had to study at least two languages. Because multilingual speakers contest the notions of both "first language" and "mother tongue" (many acquire languages simultaneously as they grow up in homes and communities where more than one language is used), the 2005 curriculum refers to one's primary language as the "main language" and to other languages that one studies as "additional languages". The Revised National Curriculum Statement (2002 a and b) use "home language", "first additional language" and "second additional language". For simplicity, we will use "home language" and "additional language" throughout.

<sup>3</sup> It is a well known fact that Dr Verwoerd, the architect of Bantu Education, said that there is "no place for [the Bantu] in the European community above the level of certain forms of labour" (Rose and Tunmer, 1975, p. 266).

which included clarity and accessibility among its principles, is designed to be more teacher-friendly.

In this article, Prinsloo will examine home language curricula in South Africa as conceptualised prior to 1994, in order to understand their affordances and constraints in relation to critical literacy. Janks will then consider *C2005* and its Revision, the curricular transformations effected by the new democratic government since 1994. Although Prinsloo's work focuses on the matriculation year, the equivalent level is not available yet for the post-1994 curriculum. While Prinsloo's work includes an analysis of the examinations that flow from the different curricula she studied, no matriculation examination has yet been based on the *C2005* curriculum. Despite this incommensurability, dramatic shifts in purpose and philosophy are evident in the new curricula that will nevertheless enable us to understand the different possibilities they have created for critical literacy since 1994.

## **LANGUAGE CURRICULA PRIOR TO 1994**

The doctoral study undertaken by Prinsloo arose as a response to teaching critical literacy modules to post-graduate education students whose ability to take up this approach to textuality differed along the lines of language and race. Particular privileged, educational backgrounds appeared to predispose groups of students to success in a critical literacy course. Rather than simply dismissing this as yet another result of apartheid's unequal educational provision, it seemed necessary to investigate those factors or conditions that limited or enabled critical literacy and to question why certain educational histories created different foundations for people to take on critical literacy or not.

Adopting a genealogical approach, informed by the writings of Foucault, Prinsloo's research views the human subject as constituted through discursive practices and recognizes that particular discursive practices validate particular knowledges and behaviours. Because these are enacted within specific social locations, this study attends to the different literacy practices as dividing practices that are materially located.

The investigation undertook a detailed analysis of the syllabus documents<sup>4</sup> and examination papers for the three languages of English, Afrikaans and isiZulu in the province of KwaZulu-Natal at the matriculation level from 1969 until political transformation. It was concerned to reveal both the form the different literacy practices have taken, as well as the kind of subjects proposed and validated by these practices, in relation to these learners taking up critical literacy. The study considered what literacy practices were proposed, what texts were considered worthy of response, what sets of readings were validated for different kinds of texts, the nature of the writing practices, how the teacher and learner were constituted and what implications all this had in relation to moral self-government.

The examination was identified as a pervasive procedure that brings power relations and knowledge relations together through surveillance and normalising judgement. Thus, the different examination papers for each were investigated in terms of the

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<sup>4</sup> Prior to 1994 these documents are called "syllabuses". Since 1994 they are "curriculum statements".

different capacities they called for, and in relation to social and cultural power. Importantly, attention was given to the different imaginary and identity repertoires that are rehearsed in the case of different language examinations.

The research found that very different sets of practices, ranges of texts and literate subjects were constituted in these different locations with implications for the insertion of the different learners they produced into relations of power. Differently constituted subjects, it was argued, are differently predisposed in relation to critical literacy.

## **ENGLISH**

The analysis of the English syllabuses indicated that by the end of the period considered, three separate strands informed English literacy practices. The first strand has persisted throughout the time span under consideration (appearing in the 1969, 1973, 1986 and 1993 syllabuses) and inscribes a thinking, reasoning subject. For example the first stated aim of the 1969 syllabus, “To teach pupils to think clearly and methodically” foregrounds this emphasis (NED, 1969, p. 1). This focus on reasoning and logic presumes an Enlightenment subject within a liberal-humanist framework. It validates a particular logical and reasoning subject and to this end comprehension activities and précis work acquire status as integral to language study.

Then, in addition to this early focus on the cognitive realm, and drawing on developments in England, the 1973 syllabus introduces a personal growth approach to language and writing which proposes a particular set of techniques that relate specifically to personal development effected within the discursive framework of the universal and rational Enlightenment subject. In accordance with its progressivist and child-centred orientation, it insists on a concern with the development of the learner, rather than discipline knowledge and skills. Thus, in the General Aim, English language education unashamedly declares its pastoral and moral intention: “to promote the pupil’s intellectual, emotional and social development” (NED, 1973, p. 1). Here, the touchstones are experience, enrichment and individual development in order to live according to the explicit normative moral imperative, “fully, consciously and responsibly” (1973, p. 1). What it effects is the foregrounding of the affective realm and concern for ease, poise and confidence in expressing ideas and opinions.

Cultural heritage is the term used to refer to the approach to literature that has developed a status of orthodoxy in English classrooms and constitutes the third strand to inform English. It assumes a particular engagement with “literary” texts by means of what Leavis termed “close reading” (1943, p. 55) and which demands a detailed analytic interpretation addressing questions of tone, style, artistic structure and figurative language, accompanied by an insistence on textual scrutiny. The cultural heritage approach focuses on the text, but requires that learners develop a reverence for such high cultural texts and learn a particular set of practices, for example, an ability to identify theme, discuss characterisation, and so on.

The complementary strand to the reverential awe for the literary text is the scepticism which is required when engaging with popular culture. Such texts are seen as suitable for identifying “emotive language”, a term not employed for literary writing, and for

establishing the intention of the text (manipulation or propaganda, for example) and its likely effects (that is, being duped). What this ensures is the inclusion of mass media texts as part of the repertoire in schools, albeit not for textual enjoyment. The forms of reading assumed here, whether of literary or media texts, require that the reader go beyond an initial reading to problematise this response in the quest for deeper significances.

Through these documents this English literate subject has been constituted as worldly. Repeatedly the value of the role of English is signalled, noting for example: the various roles of English as a world language in science, technology, literature, diplomacy, and so on (NED, 1973, p. 2), or as “a key to knowledge and communication in the world” (1969, p.1). This worldliness is enacted in the types of language activities demanded. The examination papers for writing provide occasions for expository writing, some presenting opportunities for articulating positive attitudes or aspirations, for example, “Glory be to God for dappled things” and “Old age is like everything else. To make a success of it you’ve got to start young”. Other topics call for exposition or reasoned argument. “Fashion: a despot whom the wise ridicule and obey”, insists on a critical or defensive approach to fashion, while “Walls and barriers are a persistent feature of our society ...” provides the opportunity to focus on the theme of democracy (topics taken from NED 1983 examination paper). The implicit class position is further evident in the roles that the additional writing exercise requires. Consider the following choices in the paper of 1990: a letter to the editor critiquing the relevance of the curriculum or to a “person of international repute”, alternately a speech at a teacher’s retirement party or a literary review, all providing the opportunity for rehearsing the role of the socially and intellectually adept.

The language papers, by the end of the period considered, include a broad range of texts for analysis. The texts in the 1990 language paper construct a reality that requires learners to analyse travel writing, concerns relating to endangered species and the environment, an advertisement for a Suzuki 4x4, and cartoon strips that provide humorous comment on women’s vanity, baldness and obesity. Thus, the world which the learner is directed to at least temporarily inhabit is that of a particular moral subject concerned with clean environments and endangered species and critical of mass media – a global subject possessed of general knowledge and opinions on issues of “universal” significance while distanced from those immediate more grubby and political issues of class, race, gender and other issues of social justice in a transforming country. It proposes an imagination that evades the discomfort of the local and consequently its own privilege.

The world that the English examinations constructs for learners to inhabit proposes the identity of a particular poised, literate and classed subject who, through the apprenticeship of schooled English, rehearses socially influential roles and is comfortable to challenge, demand and initiate. We call this the “worlding” of the subject – both the subject English, and the human subjects, the learners and the teachers, are called on to function within such a world. An emphasis on reasoning and a particular morality is cast within an Enlightenment sense of history and progress, complicit with the unexamined benefits of Empire. It constitutes the English subject as socially mobile and part of a global elite.

## **AFRIKAANS**

In marked contrast to the English literacy practices, Afrikaans pursues a very different path and constitutes very different literate subjects with different effects. That language served as the vehicle for political struggle in South Africa has been well documented (see Hartshorne, 1992). Certainly the approach to Afrikaans was devised in relation to a declared political agenda of Afrikaner nationalism. Christian National Education (CNE) was embedded as policy and assumed a particularly conservative form of Calvinism and a nationhood that privileged the Afrikaner.

The Afrikaans syllabus that was produced in the late sixties remained significantly unchanged until the 1987 curriculum revision. What is immediately striking is the insistence on a “scientific” approach to Afrikaans and the assumption that language operates according to a system of rules that are completely knowable. The field of study is accordingly composed of the field of linguistics and literature and learners are required to have “not only a knowledge but an understanding of scientific linguistic and literary facts”<sup>5</sup> (JMB, 1977, p.1). The approach to Afrikaans language study foregrounds “knowledge”, “facts” and “control” and proposes a mechanical and structural approach that stresses mastery of rules.

Language study is further broken down into particular elements that indicate the structural linguistic influence. Phonetics, morphology, punctuation and spelling, the sentence, stylistics and vocabulary become the structuring elements. Linguistic levels are presented as systems within systems, from phonemes, to morphemes to the higher-level system of phrases, clauses and sentences. What this demands of learners is an engagement in a range of decontextualised linguistic exercises. A large percentage amount of the language examination paper (approximately 60%) was awarded to these tasks, suggesting that they were the focus of much classroom activity.

If a “scientific” approach is thus inscribed for language study, in the literature section this is sustained with more difficulty. While acknowledging writers as “artists” and cautioning against “superficial pleasure” in favour of a “critical sense” and a “lasting love for literature”, the 1987 syllabus proposes a formalist focus on knowledge about composition and characteristics of literary genres and literary devices.

If the English syllabuses noted the superiority of English as a language of global significance in terms of diplomacy, commerce and culture, Afrikaans is deployed to construct a sense of Afrikaner identity. That teachers should instill and nurture a nationalistic Afrikaner loyalty and identity is explicitly flagged at various moments in the syllabuses in relation to writing, vocabulary and literature. The syllabuses stipulate that the topic of Afrikaans should be encouraged for comprehension tests and essay topics. This linguistic chauvinism was enacted in the official examination papers. In the 1990 writing paper the increased number of topics that invite the learner to articulate a patriotic or nationalistic position signals the strong preoccupation with the nation and with national change. The topics, “1990: The beginning of a new era for South Africa”, “South Africa, land of contrasts”, a speech that rehearses the conserving position of the “family as essence of the nation”, a

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<sup>5</sup> All quotations from the referenced Afrikaans documents have been translated into English.

quotation from *De Kat* magazine that requires a discussion of heroes of the spirit and the nation, and (possibly) “Homecoming”, provide occasions to rehearse nationalistic discourse in the face of change.

Perhaps the most explicit statement of the defensive nationalism of all the papers in the research sample occurs in the 1983 Afrikaans language paper. Here, in a newspaper article, J. C. Steyn describes the seemingly diminishing position of Afrikaans in industry as a result of multi-national corporations paying insufficient attention to Afrikaans identity. He bemoans the many management positions in large companies with an Afrikaans history now held by non-Afrikaners and the consequent threat to the Afrikaans language. English is identified as responsible for eroding Afrikaans, the more so because black people in business have been educated in English. Further, he laments how South African companies give advertising accounts to overseas bidders – even the National Party is castigated for having its election advertising done by a foreign company. Big business is thus chastised for allowing the Afrikaner’s group-identity to be sidelined and thereby making a mockery of the Afrikaans movement.

The questions on this fairly lengthy passage ensure that learners answer in the spirit of the writer: they are required to rehearse this position. Significantly, one item requires that the central idea be formulated in the learner’s words, with the explicit injunction that it be formulated as an unqualified idea, and they are warned against saying “the writer says that ...”. The response must thus be expressed as a fact. The requirement that learners summarise the passage is another form of rehearsal. Here a particular Afrikaner subject is constituted through an evangelical call to defend the nation.

The kinds of textual engagement in Afrikaans clearly required a particular deference to authority and a rehearsal of ideological positions different from the call for exposition and argument around less explicitly political topics in English. Nor is the expression of personally held positions, that are promoted by the personal growth strand of English, encouraged here. While media texts are included, they are considered in relation to content rather than to purpose and context.

A transitivity analysis, which enables the examination of the different activities and actors included in the examination, enables one to consider the “world” constructed in the papers. This “worlding” includes a particular range of professional roles and a nostalgia for the land, while the comprehension passages demand the rehearsal of particular ideological stances. However, the writing activities tended to rehearse active roles that assume civic responsibility and a degree of status as a nationally defined elite.

## **ISIZULU**

Perhaps one of the more dramatic moments in the research undertaken occurred when analysing the 1973 Bantu Languages syllabus which informed the teaching of isiZulu. It gradually became evident that the wording of large sections of the Afrikaans and Bantu Languages syllabuses were identical. That this was so is evidence of the extent to which Christian National Education thinking became conveniently invoked for

African education. The assumed notion of the ordained superiority of the Boer is described in the Christian National Education document as follows:

... any system of teaching and education of natives must be based on these same principles (trusteeship, no equality and segregation), ... must be grounded in the life- and world-view of the whites, most especially of the Boer nation as the senior white trustee of the native... The mother tongue must be the basis of native education and teaching but ... the two official languages must be taught as subjects because they are official languages and ... the keys to the cultural loans that are necessary to his own cultural progress (as translated in Rose and Tunmer, 1975, pp. 127-8).

In the case of the syllabuses under discussion, it is clear that the “senior trustee” had a hand in writing them. While large parts of the syllabuses are identical, it is the discrepancies that are revealing. One significant difference is the way in which the black learner is inscribed by the syllabuses of 1973 and is dealt with in some detail below to make the point. Certain statements are ideologically laden and revealing about the attitudes of the syllabus producers. Consider the following table that lists the imperatives for the “Bantu” learner on the left-hand side. That which s/he must learn is listed on the right-hand side to correspond with the imperatives.

TABLE 1. Analysis of how the “Bantu child” is constituted in the 1977 Bantu Language syllabus.

the “Bantu child” ...	
should not view	his mother tongue as a European language
should be taught	that his mother tongue has peculiar (sic) qualities
is to be taught	his mother tongue is much more bound up with form
	in its system of writing it does not follow the European languages
	it has its own sound system
	its literature reflects both the traditional culture and the modern way of life
(it is imperative to) be taught from the outset	grammatical concepts which pertain to his language
must be fully versed in	the official orthography
above all ... must be taught	to respect his mother tongue

If Bantu Languages are constituted in their peculiar otherness, the learner is similarly constituted as deficient. The syllabus constructs the isiZulu mother tongue learner as a human subject who views “his mother tongue as if it were a European language”, who is not “versed in the official orthography”, and who does not “respect his mother tongue”, for he has to be taught these matters. The goals that this deficient learner should aspire to are also not pitched very high. He is required to develop “an adequate ability to control the language by thinking and reasoning in it”. It is extraordinary to assume that formal education is a prerequisite for any group to think in their mother tongue.

In relation to the similarities, the insistence on a “scientific” approach to literacy practices is visited on Bantu languages, thus ensuring that their learning is consonant

with Afrikaans rather than English. The examinations consequently have allocated some 45% to the Language Paper, which consists of numerous isolated linguistic items, including phonetic transcription, morphological detail, and so on. Only 11% of the paper is given to comprehension and the amount that students have to read in the isiZulu papers is much less than for English and Afrikaans. Where the English language paper consists of 14 pages, the isiZulu paper is confined to 3 or 4 and the comprehension is 12-30 lines long in comparison to 120 lines.

The literature requirements in the syllabuses include traditional forms on the one hand and texts concerned with Zulu ethnicity on the other. Within the examinations, the questions relate to content and superficial plot detail. The approach to literature has retained a doctrinaire intention inherited from the missionaries in the Nineteenth and early Twentieth Centuries and the questions frequently call for the learner to identify the moral to the story.

The National Party's intention to secure their role as "senior trustee" of the black population took various material forms which produced far-reaching and long-lasting discursive effects. The syllabuses and examinations, products of the institutional and ideological machinery, serve as material evidence of the construction and containment of the 1973 Bantu Language syllabus in line with the "scientific" approach for Afrikaans<sup>6</sup>. Consequently, schooled isiZulu has remained frozen in time informed by a persisting structural approach to language that is remote from language in use.

These literacy practices work to constitute subjects marked by deference and allegiance to those in authority, whether parents, traditional forms of authority or the law. Texts serve as occasions for two kinds of responses. The first relates to the required acknowledgement of the author as an accomplished artist and thus an authority to be respected, while the second calls for the intended lesson or message to the readers to be recounted. The message calls for moralistic judgements rather than an empathetic approach to the circumstances described. It serves to produce docility and respect. A set of literacy practices, that focus on the repetition of surface and narrational detail, accompanies this reverence for the authority of both author and the text. Authority is not challenged in any way and the surface of the text is never scratched. The stage that Mellor & Patterson (1996) describe as the first of a reading lesson, the injunction to put the initial reading into question, is never invoked. The language section is marked by a kind of linguistic fundamentalism, which calls for disconnected linguistic detail, evidence of accepting the discipline and authority of the teacher and submitting to this apprenticeship.

The implicit docility inscribed within this set of practices becomes more evident in the "worlding" of the examination papers, which under the rubric of relevance and serving the purposes of apartheid's "Own Affairs" policy, populate the imaginary scenarios with chiefs, traditional practices and rural landscapes. When urban concerns are gradually introduced into these worlds, they speak to a harsh and impoverished urban environment, of all male hostels, crime, difficult commuting and body odour<sup>7</sup>.

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<sup>6</sup> It is due to the contrastive form of syllabus analysis that this control became so manifestly evident and extended to the very words and phrases used. If either analysis had been conducted separately, these insights would not have become evident.

<sup>7</sup> For example, the topic for the additional writing activity in 1978 called for the learner to write to a

In this world a subaltern status is assumed which demands an allegiance to a parochialised Zulu identity constructed within a retrospective nostalgia. The roles that are rehearsed relate to gratitude, to requesting assistance, explaining poor performance – moments that disclose inadequacies, provide exercises in being beholden and deny opportunities for self-assured engagement in all spheres of society.

While the “world” is occasionally expanded to include urban life, the realm of textuality in the classroom remains constrained. Where English and Afrikaans literacy practices incorporate a widening range of media texts, both print and visual, the IsiZulu texts are expanded by the inclusion of an increasing number of Christian religious tracts or texts. If traditional narratives propose a subjectivity marked by docile ethnicity, the religious texts further the doctrinaire approach to textuality, with its due reverence to both author and message. In summary then, these literacy practices can be located as material practices with profound political and human effects – they work to produce subaltern literate subjects.

## **THE CURRICULUM AFTER 1994**

The post apartheid curriculum, *C2005*, and its Revision, effects two key shifts. First, it establishes a single curriculum for all South Africans and, second, it introduces outcomes-based education.

### **A single curriculum**

Given Prinsloo’s (2002) analysis of how different curricula created different possibilities for different human subjects, the introduction of a single curriculum is important as it establishes equal expectations of all students. It is explicit about the values that underpin the curriculum and the kind of learner that it is designed to produce.

The *Overview to the Revised National Curriculum Statement* (DE, 2002a p. 7) includes the aims of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996 (Act No 108 of 1996). These aims are to:

- Heal the divisions of the past and establish a society based on democratic values, social justice and fundamental human rights.
- Improve the quality of life of all citizens and free the potential of each person.
- Lay the foundations for a democratic and open society in which the Government is based on the will of the people and every citizen is protected by law.
- Build a united and democratic South Africa able to take its rightful place as a sovereign state in the family of nations.

The ten fundamental values for education (DE, 2001) are derived from these aims and are also included in the Revised statement. They are: democracy, social justice and

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national newspaper complaining about commuters with bad body odour and offering them advice. This topic (inviting a recitation of personal hygiene) is quite simply outside the discursive parameters of that which could be included in the Afrikaans and English papers.

equity, non-racism and non-sexism, democracy, Ubuntu (human dignity), open society, accountability (responsibility), respect, rule of law and reconciliation.

These values are explicitly linked to a new vision of the learner

The kind of learner envisaged is one who will be imbued with the values and act in the interests of a society based on respect for democracy, equality, human dignity, life and social justice.

The curriculum aims to develop the full potential of each learner as a citizen of a democratic South Africa. It seeks to create a lifelong learner who is confident and independent, literate, numerate and multi-skilled, compassionate, with a respect for the environment and the ability to participate in society as a critical and active citizen (DE, 2002a, p. 8).

Both *C2005* and the *Revised National Curriculum Statement* include the same shared vision of the kind of country education should help to produce.

A prosperous, truly united, democratic and internationally competitive country, with literate, creative and critical citizens, leading productive, self-fulfilled lives in a country free of violence, discrimination and prejudice (DE, 1997, p.1; DE, 2002a, p. 4).

References to democracy, equality, social justice, human dignity, human rights and human potential abound in the new curriculum documents, which insist that

Social justice requires that those sections of the population previously disempowered by the lack of knowledge and skills, should now be empowered. ... It does so by specifying the combination of minimum knowledge and skills to be achieved by learners in each grade, and setting high, achievable standards in all the Learning Areas (DE, 2002, p. 12).

The human subject conceived of by *C2005* and its Revision is predominantly a national subject “nurturing the new patriotism” (DE, 2002a, p. 8), who is able to make a productive contribution to the new South Africa and who is imbued with values normed on the 1996 Constitution. The Curriculum focuses on establishing a new unified national identity through its education system, which previously contributed to the apartheid production of division and difference. This focus on national identity does not, however, preclude the local and the global. Learners also need to become “responsible citizens in the life of local, national and global communities” (DE, 2002a, p. 11).

These new-nation citizens need to be “literate, creative and critical”. What exactly is meant by critical is not spelt out clearly in the Overview statement. It is however defined in the Introduction to the Revised Curriculum for the Languages Learning Area (for home languages and additional languages). There it states that languages serve a variety of purposes: personal, communicative, educational, aesthetic, cultural, political and critical. In this context “critical” means

To understand the relationship between language and power, power and identity and to challenge uses of these where necessary; to understand the dynamic nature of culture; and to resist persuasion and positioning where necessary (DE, 2002b, p. 5).

This definition squares with our understanding of “critical” in the discourses of critical literacy. We assume a broad definition of critical literacy as an approach to textuality that acknowledges all language practices as socially grounded and so inherently ideological (Misson 1996, p. 3) and thus concerned with issues of power and social justice. Critical literacy refers to a socio-cultural critique of the production, reception and circulation of language and image in text that is concerned with the cultural and ideological assumptions that underwrite texts with the politics of representation. It proposes a particular lens through which to receive and produce texts that necessitates shifts in both theory and practice away from established ways of teaching literacy.

Elsewhere in the curriculum documents, “critical” collocates with “thinking” and refers to reasoning and analysis. Janks (2002) argues that this meaning of critical is also central to critical literacy and that critical deconstruction depends on critique based on reason<sup>8</sup>. Fairclough’s model of critical discourse analysis, for example, depends on three inter-related forms of analysis: text analysis, processing analysis and social analysis, which he calls description, interpretation and explanation (Fairclough, 1989; 1995). All of these forms of analysis depend on logical reasoning and argument in relation to evidence in both text and context.

### **Outcomes-based education**

The second major transformation is the introduction of outcomes-based education (OBE). Outcomes make explicit the knowledge, values and skills that “learners should know, demonstrate and be able to do” (DE, 2002a, p. 14). The outcomes remain constant throughout the General Education and Training band (R - Grade 9), while the assessment standards require conceptual progression and assume “more complex, deeper and broader expectations” (DE, 2002a, p. 13).

We have already considered the possibilities for critical literacy afforded by the values that underpin the new curriculum. In considering the new outcomes, the focus shifts to knowledge and skills. Two kinds of outcomes underpin both *C2005* and its revision.

- 1 The critical outcomes, called the critical and developmental outcomes in the Revised Curriculum, which apply across all the Learning Areas
- 2 The Specific Outcomes in Learning Area, called the Learning Outcomes in the Revision.

The critical and developmental outcomes are mandated by the South African Qualifications Act and apply to all qualifications registered on the National Qualification Framework at all levels of education and training.

The critical outcomes envisage learners who are able to:

- Identify and solve problems and make decisions using critical and creative thinking;
- Work effectively with others as members of a team, group, organisation and

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<sup>8</sup> Janks also argues that “critical literacy does not sufficiently address the non-rational investments that readers bring with them to text and tasks” (2002, p. 7).

community;

- Organise and manage themselves and their activities responsibly and effectively;
- Collect, analyse, organise and critically evaluate information;
- Communicate effectively using visual, symbolic and or language skills in various modes;
- Use science and technology effectively and critically, showing responsibility towards the environment and the health of others; and
- Demonstrate an understanding of the world as a set of related systems by recognising that problem-solving contexts do not exist in isolation.

The developmental outcomes envisage learners who are also able to:

- Reflect on and explore a variety of strategies to learn more effectively;
- Participate as responsible citizens in the life of local, national and global communities;
- Be culturally and aesthetically sensitive across a range of social contexts;
- Explore education and career opportunities
- Develop entrepreneurial opportunities.

(SAQA Act, 1995; DE, 1997, p. 15; DE, 2002a, pp. 1-2)

There is nothing in the critical and developmental outcomes that relates the use of “critical” to a social justice agenda for education or to an analytic of power. However, as these Critical and Developmental Outcomes follow the statement of values and the description of the envisaged learner in the Overview statement of the Revised Curriculum, such an interpretation is not precluded.

Moving then to the Language Learning Area as the specific locus for language/literacy development (and potentially inclusive of critical literacy), no distinction between the different languages is made here. The outcomes for all languages are the same and although OBE has not yet been implemented in Grades 10 to 12, all students in State schools already write a common matriculation examination<sup>9</sup>. The Learning Area specific outcomes for literacy differ in *C2005* and the *Revised National Curriculum Statement*. At first glance they appear to be completely different, but a systematic analysis shows both continuities and discontinuities. In *C2005*, the learning area is named, *Language, Literacy and Communication* and the outcomes for all languages, studied as home language or as additional language are called Specific Outcomes (SO).

- |                     |  |
|---------------------|--|
| Specific Outcome 1: | Learners make and negotiate meaning and understanding.                                 |
| Specific Outcome 2: | Learners show critical awareness of language usage.                                    |
| Specific Outcome 3: | Learners respond to the aesthetic, affective, cultural and social values in texts.     |
| Specific Outcome 4: | Learners access, process and use information from a variety of sources and situations. |
| Specific Outcome 5: | Learners know and apply language structures and conventions in context.                |

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<sup>9</sup> It is still possible for students to sit the Independent Examination Board (IEB) matriculation examination. The IEB, previously called the Joint Matriculation Board, existed during the period of Prinsloo’s research but as it is outside the State system, it was not considered. Its future is currently under review by the Minister of Education.

- Specific Outcome 6: Learners use language for learning.  
 Specific Outcome 7: Learners use appropriate communication strategies for specific purposes and situations. (Department of Education, 1997, p. 3).

In the Revised National Curriculum Statement the outcomes for all home languages and all additional languages are the same. The learning area is now named *Languages* and the outcomes are now called Learning Outcomes (LO).

Learning Outcome 1: Listening

The learner will be able to listen for information and enjoyment, and respond critically in a wide range of situations.

Learning Outcome 2: Speaking

The learner will be able to communicate confidently and effectively in a spoken language in a wide range of situations.

Learning Outcome 3: Reading and viewing

The learner will be able to read and view for information and enjoyment and respond critically to the affective, cultural and emotional values in texts.

Learning Outcome 4: Writing

The learner will be able to write different kinds of factual and imaginative texts for a wide range of purposes.

Learning Outcome 5: Thinking and reasoning

The learner will be able to use language to think and reason and access, process and use information for learning.

Learning Outcome 6: Language Structure and Use

The learner will be able to use the sounds, words and the grammar of a language to create and interpret texts.

(Department of Education, 2002b, p. 56).

It is clear that the Revised Curriculum uses the modalities of orality and literacy as the organising structure for the curriculum, with a focus on the oral/aural skills of speaking and listening and the literacy skills of reading, writing and viewing. This looks like a communicative language teaching emphasis as opposed to the more socio-cultural orientation to literacy in *C2005*, encoded there in words such as: “make and negotiate meaning”, “show critical awareness of language” “respond to cultural and social values in texts”, “in context”. Table 2, which shows how the *C2005* outcomes are changed by the revision, reveals more continuity between the two versions of *C2005*, than one might expect from simply reading the outcomes. There are also some significant discontinuities: Specific Outcome 2, designed to develop learners’ critical awareness of language and Specific Outcome 7, designed to develop learners’ use of “appropriate communication strategies”, no longer appear as separate outcomes.

TABLE 2: A comparison of outcomes for literacy in *Curriculum 2005* and the *Revised National Curriculum Statement* (2002b)

<b>Curriculum 2005 Grades (R-9) DE 1997: Specific Outcomes</b>	<b>Continuities and discontinuities. How 2005 outcomes are revised</b>	<b>Revised National Curriculum Statement Grades (R-9) DE, 2002: Learning outcomes</b>
Specific Outcome 1 Learners make and negotiate meaning and understanding.	Making meaning is replaced by speaking and writing (LO 2 and 4) and understanding meaning is replaced by listening and reading/viewing (LO1 and 3). Negotiation falls away.	Learning Outcome 1: Listening The learner will be able to listen for information and enjoyment, and respond critically in a wide range of situations.
Specific Outcome 2 Learners show critical awareness of language usage.	CLA falls away as a separate outcome but is included in the Overview to the curriculum, in the purpose statement of the Learning area, in values, and in assessment standards across the new outcomes	Learning Outcome 2: Speaking The learner will be able to communicate confidently and effectively in a spoken language in a wide range of situations.
Specific Outcome 3 Learners respond to the aesthetic, affective, cultural and social values in texts.	Outcome 3 is maintained in LO3: reading and viewing. The revision adds reading for information, enjoyment and shifts from “social” values in texts to “emotional” values.	Learning Outcome 3: Reading and viewing The learner will be able to read and view for information and enjoyment and respond critically to the affective, cultural and emotional values in texts.
Specific Outcome 4 Learners access, process and use information from a variety of sources and situations.	This outcome appears intact as part of LO5: thinking and reasoning. It is included explicitly in listening and reading, and implicitly in speaking and writing where students have to be able operate these skills for “a wide range of purposes”.	Learning Outcome 4: Writing The learner will be able to write different kinds of factual and imaginative texts for a wide range of purposes.
Specific Outcome 5 Learners know and apply language structures and conventions in context.	This becomes LO6 – Language Structure and Use. It is now expanded to include phonics and the use of language for both creating and interpreting texts.	Learning Outcome 5: Thinking and reasoning The learner will be able to use language to think and reason and access, process and use information for learning.

Specific Outcome 6 Learners use language for learning.	This becomes LO5 - language is seen as fundamental to thinking and reasoning which are essential for learning	Learning Outcome 6: Language Structure & Use The learner will be able to use the sounds, words and the grammar of a language to create and interpret texts.
Specific Outcome 7 Learners use appropriate communication strategies for specific purposes and situations	This outcome appears in LO2 and 4 where students have to write and speak for a wide range of purposes (and, one might therefore assume, situations). Appropriacy, a fundamental concept in Communicative Language Teaching, falls away as a separate outcome.	

Although the modalities of language were not foregrounded in *C2005*, the assessment criteria and performance indicators made it clear that the different specific outcomes privileged one or more of speaking, listening, reading or writing. SO1 refers to all four modalities; SO2, SO3 and SO4 were restricted to how texts were to be read, viewed or listened to, in relation to different purposes for “reading”; SO5, SO6 and SO7 were tied to using language in writing and speaking rather than for reading and listening. Of the seven outcomes, only SO3, “critical awareness of language” embodied a critical literacy orientation, as if this could be compartmentalised into one outcome designed specifically for this purpose. It is particularly significant that “knowledge of language” (SO5) was not linked to understanding how linguistic selection produces different meanings that work to position texts differently<sup>10</sup>.

While the use of the word “critical” only appears in two of the Learning Outcomes, in the Revised Learning Area for Languages, the Assessment Standards for Grade 9<sup>11</sup> (DE, 2002b) require learners to demonstrate their critical literacy across the different learning outcomes.

- In LO1 learners must: “listen and respond critically in a wide range of situations” (p. 98)
- In LO2 learners must: “tackle important issues (e.g. social and ethical issues related to the environment and human rights)” (p. 101)
- In LO3 learners must: respond critically to texts, evaluate “the writer’s point of view”, evaluate “implicit or hidden messages, [and] any bias or prejudice”, “make judgements about the values in texts, the impact on readers and “the aspects of the texts which create these effects” (p. 107).
- In LO4 learners must: “explore the critical use of language” and “analyse multiple drafts” to consider “point of view”, “positioning of the reader” and “bias” (p. 111).
- In LO5 learners must: “analyse cause and effect (for example, by looking at causes beyond the obvious)” (p. 113); “ask challenging questions on national and cross curricular issues (e.g. HIV/AIDS, rise in interest rates)” (p. 113); “recognise when a

<sup>10</sup> See Janks, 2001, for further discussion of the relationship between the specific outcomes and speaking, listening, reading and writing.

<sup>11</sup> We chose Grade 9, as it is the highest level for which the Curriculum has, as yet, been produced.

speaker or source is ambiguous, abuses evidence or makes unfounded claims” (p. 113); evaluate the reliability and validity of information from print and other media sources” (p. 115); reflect and then ask critical questions and challenge views on what is seen, heard and read” (p. 117).

- In LO6 learners must: “develop critical language awareness”; analyse “manipulative language and rhetorical language” (p. 119); examine “how language is used to construct gender, race, the environment, health etc., and how the reader is positioned – suggest ways of re-writing texts to create other possibilities” (p. 121).

While critical literacy is no longer foregrounded in the Learning Area, it is also no longer isolated in its own little box. It is particularly important to see that it appears as part of language production, writing and speaking and not just as an orientation to the critical analysis of texts, listening and reading/viewing. It is now seen as fundamental to thinking and reasoning, which focuses on the use of language for learning across the curriculum.

## CONCLUSION

It is clear that curriculum transformation in South Africa since the election of the first democratic government envisages learners who are critically literate across multiple modalities and who have equal access to knowledge and skills across the curriculum. This constitutes long overdue redress. While this is a necessary condition for eradicating historical disadvantage, it is not a sufficient condition. In conclusion, we wish to argue that there are at least three other necessary conditions that need to be met.

First, the teachers currently in the schools are already constituted as different kinds of literate subjects, as shown by Prinsloo’s (2002) research. The in-service teacher education needed to implement this curriculum has to go beyond orientation to OBE. The Review Committee concluded that the training that was provided for teachers on *C2005*

tended to focus on terminology rather than on how and what to teach in an outcomes-based framework. As a result, there appears to be limited transfer to classroom practice (Review Committee, 2000, p. 61).

The Review Committee strongly recommended the provision of university-based in-service courses for teacher orientation, training and support and it stressed the need to focus on deepening content knowledge in the different learning areas. Prinsloo’s work suggests that these courses would need to change teachers’ own literacy practices, if we expect them to produce critically literate learners. Our experience leads us to conclude that this is unlikely to happen as a result of a single in-service course.

Second is the question of the language of learning and teaching, elsewhere known as the medium of instruction. As long as some learners continue to learn through a medium in which they have neither communicative competence, nor sufficient academic literacy, they will continue to be disadvantaged. The Revised National Curriculum Statement for Home Languages recommends that

The learner's home language should be used for learning and teaching wherever possible...

Where learners have to make a transition from their home language to an additional language as the language of learning and teaching ...

- The additional language should be introduced as a subject in Grade 1;
- The home language should continue to be used alongside the additional language for as long as possible;
- When learners enter a school where the language of learning and teaching is an additional language for the learner, the teacher and other educators should make provision for special assistance and supplementary learning of the additional language, until such time as the learner is able to learn effectively in the language of learning and teaching (DE, 2002b, p. 5).

While it is possible to introduce the language of learning and teaching into Grade 1 with immediate effect, it is difficult to support the home languages of all the learners in schools. In many urban schools, all eleven official languages of South Africa are spoken as home languages by the different learners. In addition, providing special assistance and supplementary learning for learners who cannot learn effectively in the language of learning and teaching requires additional human resources for already under-resourced schools, many of which still have unacceptably high teacher pupil ratios and overcrowded classrooms.

Third is the question of material resources. Many schools in black townships and rural communities lack the basic material necessities for implementing the Revised Curriculum: classrooms and furniture, text books, reading books, computers, printers, duplicating facilities, and an adequate supply of paper and stationery. Food security for poor children is also a growing concern<sup>12</sup>.

Much still needs to happen before we can be sure that all children in South Africa have equal access to education, let alone to an education which enables the development of critical literacy.

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<sup>12</sup> School feeding was introduced on a national scale in South Africa in 1994, following President Nelson Mandela's announcement in his State of the Nation Address on 24 May, 1994, that a nutritional feeding scheme would be implemented in every primary school where such a need was established. In 1999/2000, 15, 428 schools and 4.8 million learners participated in school feeding ([www.schoolfeeding.co.za](http://www.schoolfeeding.co.za)). According to the Sunday Times, 14 July 2002, the [Gauteng] provincial government acknowledges that "750, 000 children fall outside its feeding scheme". For some children, the school meal is the only meal that they receive.

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