



The Primary School, literacy group in grade R

# School Libraries in a Democratic South Africa

– Curriculum Support, Information Literacy, Policy Development

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For all help with my project and my stay in South Africa I would like to thank my contact persons in Gauteng Educational Department and in Knysna and their colleagues. Thanks also to all my interviewees, especially the teacher librarians!

Maud Hell

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## Summary

1997 in South Africa a national policy for school libraries was proposed, that stressed the importance of library service to facilitate the learners with the resource material needed to fulfil the outcomes of the new Curriculum 2005.

This thesis looks at what has happened since 1997, two school libraries and two different provinces are investigated. The research questions are:

- How can school libraries be used to improve the new teaching and learning in schools?
- What is happening with school library policy in South Africa?

How can school libraries be used to reach the goals of the new school curriculum? What obstacles are there? How important is a national policy framework for school library standards? Is the development of school libraries on the agenda for the South African provinces?

The thesis has a background in the author's participation in a Swedish- South African school library project, LPYL. It tries to position education and school libraries in the field of Communication for Development. The author uses a multi-method approach with visits and interviews with teachers, learners and principals in two schools and interviews with regional school library officers, literature review of library history and research and articles on policy-making and analyses of policy documents. Seminars from a conference on e-learning in South Africa are also part of the references.

The findings show that school libraries have a chance to improve the new teaching and learning in schools, if they have the possibilities with staff and resources. The interviews showed that teachers and learners would like to use school libraries more and that they got valuable help by them.

The long story of "The school library policy" has not been told to the end. It depends on many different things, in addition to lack of resources. Among those are: too little communication between the different educational levels of society, different educational policies and strategies which often seem to be divergent and many reforms and transformations in the educational field requiring time to understand and adjust to. The thesis suggests some actions that could promote school libraries' support to curriculum.

## South Africa after apartheid – education a tool for change

In 1994 the first democratic election was held in South Africa. The new government started a process to transform the country from an unjust apartheid society to a democratic, non-racial and just society. The constitution is from 1997. The commitment to transformation was affirmed after the next two elections held in 1999 and in 2004. The country is new, but the old structures are lingering on. They have left deep imprints and are not easy to get rid of.

Segregated and unequal education in the country in the first part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the Bantu Education, part of the racial segregation that the Nationalist Party government institutionalized from 1949, still hamper the development. As the Minister of Education said in her budget speech this year: "One of the early lessons for every minister of education in our still young democracy is the painful realization that the terrible impact and imprint of apartheid education is as hard and as unyielding as a crocodile's skin. This is not an excuse by any means; rather it is acknowledgement of the immense task that faces our entire nation."

The government has made great efforts and allocated relatively big amounts of money to education. But time has yet been too short to transform the situation to a great extent. Many rural schools are poorly resourced, without adequate accommodation, equipment, books, and some without electricity and running water. The injustice continues through differently equipped schools in areas with different prerequisites. The former white schools are often better off with libraries and a lot of equipment, e.g. computers.<sup>1</sup>

It is almost impossible to imagine in how many different areas changes were needed. One of the important equity questions is the language question, very important in education. The uprising in 1976, against education in Afrikaans being forced upon students, was one in the course of events that led to the defeat of apartheid. In the new rainbow nation a vivid discussion of languages is going on and eleven official languages have been declared, of which Zulu and Xhosa are the biggest African languages. There is a development going on producing books in the African languages, but still there is too little indigenous literature. Illiteracy rate is still high, few have a habit to read, the book market is small and information about ongoing publication projects is often also ineffective, I think. I have also noticed that many people are more interested in that their children learn English properly than that they study their mother tongue and the children like English too. My view is that the Government has a reason to be concerned about the situation of the indigenous languages.

In education there is a plan called the Tirisano action plan. Tirisano means "working together". During the time of Kader Asmal, the Minister of Education between 1999 and 2004, this plan was created to change the education system by working together with other state departments, provinces and local governments (communities). There are nine provinces in South Africa with provincial governments and departments. The education is compulsory to the ninth year and a pre-school year called grade R (Reception year) began to be provided in 2002.

## **Background to my study**

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<sup>1</sup> For short and easily found historical and cultural facts about South Africa I have used and recommend the website *South African History Online*, <http://www.sahistory.org.za/>, useful in South Africa for schools and communities. The history project also produces books and gives assistance to undertake oral history investigations and in the use of Internet technology to people in schools and communities to tell their own histories.

As a school and public librarian I found it interesting to educate myself further in a distance course at Malmö University: *Culture, Media and Globalisation*. It was an introduction to the subject *Communication for Development*. Within the following three semesters I went on to the Master course in Communication for Development and carried out my idea to make a small project in South Africa trying to investigate what was happening with respect to school libraries on the national, provincial and local school level. I had been visiting South Africa two times before, both times in connection with school libraries. The role of school libraries in enhancing education, promoting reading, different kinds of literacies and democracy I think can be essential in building a new country like South Africa.

My first time in South Africa was as a participant in a school library project. The project Library Practice for Young Learners (LPYL) 1997-2002 was one of the projects in focus some years ago, when the Swedish cultural development policy towards South Africa was discussed. This discussion and evaluation of the Swedish development cooperation with South Africa led to The Swedish – South African Culture Partnership Programme, now administered by The Swedish National Council for Cultural Affairs. The experiences from the LPYL project were valuable for the future cooperation.

LPYL, a Swedish-South African project focused on human resource development and was designed to explore some of the untested innovations in South African educational policy among a sample of school librarians in all of South Africa's nine provinces. The project was also designed to provide mutual exchange of knowledge and expertise between Swedish and South African library personnel. Ideas from a conference in 1995 and the planning of a South African policy framework for school library standards formed the important bases for the strategic direction of the project.

The Swedish library organisation BiS (Library in Society) was one of the partners in this project. That is the reason why I was involved, firstly in 2000, when the first phase of the project was reported at the conference of International Association of School Libraries (IASL) in Malmö. Some of the participants from South Africa visited my hometown Lund and I arranged study visits to libraries.

When the project continued with a second phase, I got the possibility to become one of nine librarians in an exchange tour in 2001. We studied in Sweden before the project and then went on a study tour for three weeks to South Africa. In groups of three with a South African

local group leader we visited libraries in two provinces. We had ambitious seminars before and after the tour. The theme for my tour was poverty and long distances and we really experienced that in the transport by aeroplane and minibus on bad roads and with difficulty to keep time planning. We also met many dedicated people working hard for school libraries.

In the seminars in South Africa and in Sweden together with the South African school librarians, one of the main intentions of the project was to encourage school library plans for the future and school library committees in the schools. These were also important development criteria in the discussion document *A National Policy Framework for School Library Standards*. This document has since then played a big role in my mind and I have often wondered why this document that seemed so well prepared and very much in line with the new curriculum, never got an official status. When I was in South Africa again in 2003, reporting about the LPYL project on the IASL (International Association of School Libraries) conference, that year held in Durban, the *National Policy Framework for School Library Standards* was again mentioned in the discussion and a rather angry group of South African school library lobbyists wanted to write a petition to the Minister of Education and demand for action! Like me they did not understand why the government had not issued a plan about how schools should access their learning resources and how a library service could be arranged for the schools. Suggestions had been existent for at least six years, but no one seemed to have taken responsibility for making them official or work with them. They had maybe fallen between chairs in two different departments, that of Culture and that of Education? Somehow this document seemed to be under a spell. I have since then been curious to know about the story and wanted to investigate what happened to the spellbound draft *National Policy Framework for School Library Standards* and that is one of my main questions in this thesis. My aim is also to give some examples of school library research and investigate what role school libraries and policy could play in South Africa.

### **Historical background: libraries for the People of Africa**

In their book *The Quiet Struggle. Information and Libraries for the People of Africa* (1990), Sturges and Neill tell a sad story of the role of libraries in Southern Africa in the twentieth century even as late as the 1990s. The Anglo-American tradition, which was exported to Africa by returning expatriate librarians, stagnated and did not fulfil its mission. The librarians had good intentions and in the early years of independence they had a perception of the problems of establishing libraries in developing countries. But “it is doubtful if the Anglo-

American tradition was really in a fit condition for export to Africa” (Sturges & Neill, p. 90). This old paradigm began to break down in the 80s. In 1982 the Tanzanian librarian K.J. Mchombu wrote an article with the title *On the Librarianship of Poverty*, which the authors say had some impact on the change. The young librarians first trying to question the old basis of library service, with an established hierarchy mainly influenced by the United Kingdom, often were suppressed in the beginning and accused of being “non-professional” (ibid. p.117ff).

In South Africa the changing of ideas was taking place too, but was still harder to adapt with apartheid ruling. Though South Africa had a network of public libraries, they were not used by the black community, as shown in an investigation from 1988 (p. 134). In spite of this, theories of change were emerging that could serve as a foundation for post-apartheid change. (p. 136f). But among some South Africans I have noticed that there is still a feeling that libraries are not for them and the change seems to be very slow.

### **School libraries**

The situation of the school libraries was critical in South Africa. In the 80s “school libraries, where they existed, remained on the periphery of the school’s learning programme.” (Hart, G. in Wettmark, L. 2002 p. 6f) There were school library policies in apartheid South Africa, even in black schools. During apartheid there were 19 racially-based education departments and the white schools had fine libraries. In the end of the 80s also other (so called coloured and Indian) sectors in South Africa began to get school libraries and staff. This ended in the 90s, when the huge disparities were no longer allowed. (Hart, G. 2001?) The old departments were shut down and the policies went down with them, as reported both by Genivieve Hart and my informant in Gauteng Educational Department (see interview in appendix). “... /I/n 1996 only about one quarter of today’s teachers had any exposure to libraries in their child-hoods. ... only so-called middle class schools have effective school libraries. Schools in working class communities have not been able to maintain their libraries.” (Hart, G. in Wettmark, L. 2002 p. 6f)

From research in the 90s it was clear that: “In South Africa the majority of schools do not have adequate or good media centres, in fact, they often do not have one at all. Where media centres exist more and more often the media teacher has to spend most of the day in the classroom teaching examination subjects.” (Olën, 1996)<sup>2</sup>

“By mid-2003, South Africa had more than 11 373 libraries, with 77 HE /higher education/ libraries, 9 416 school libraries, 79 government departmental libraries, one national library with two branches, and 1 800 public libraries provided by provincial and local government (library services and metro libraries). Less than 10% of secondary schools had school libraries.”(*Education*. South Africa Yearbook 2004/2005)

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<sup>2</sup> In her article Olën uses the concept media centres synonymous with school libraries and media teacher with teacher librarian. This is a common use e.g. in USA.

The conclusion must be that the critical situation for school libraries has not changed much in the last decade.

School policies issued after 1998 could make you believe that a change was near. With the new school curriculum coming, the hope emerged among those who believed that school libraries could improve education and that learners have a right to well resourced school libraries. They should be used to integrate knowledge of different media, library and information into the education. The school libraries should be an important provider of the school's resources and their goals should be to support the new curriculum. This is clearly manifested in the suggestions of a school library policy.

### **The story of policy**

Already in 1997 a well-prepared document proposed a national policy for school library standards. In the draft *National Policy Framework for School Library Standards* (Department of Education, 1997, from here referred to as The Policy Framework), the hopes that the new curriculum would play a vital role were also evident: "The curriculum will transform the education system and bring South Africa into line with international trends of multi-skilling and globalisation". (Department of Education, 1997 p. 16) The Policy Framework was the result of the cooperation between the CETDE (Centre for Educational Technology and Distance Education of the Department of Education), a Research Working Group and all the provincial senior managers of school library services, incorporating inputs of several experts on school library services. The authors think that the provision of learning material and resources will be a cornerstone of the new curriculum and that "school libraries are the obvious vehicle to sustain and replenish this provision" (p. 8).

The Policy Framework gives an overview of school library research and of the previous history of South African school libraries. It describes different models of school libraries from which it could be possible to choose, not to be locked only to the model of a centralised library in each school. It proposes that also other models like classroom collections and a cluster of schools sharing resources could be tested. The school library should be seen as a teaching method to enhance the school's curriculum and not just as a physical facility. (p. 5)

My first meeting with this document was in my involvement with the LPYL project 2000. The participants of the LPYL project all thought that it should not be long before the Policy Framework would be official policy.

The group that had worked with this document had followed the rules that seem to be usual for South African policy making with intentions to create democratic changes in society. Many different groups of stakeholders were involved in writing the document and conferences and possibilities for giving feedback were offered. But it is not clear how far the draft document reached. Something stopped it on its way to official status. Some of the obstacles could be e.g. different standpoints in the question of what role public libraries should play, what kind of staff that was needed and of course the financial part of the suggestions. They could cost far too much.

Those who wanted public libraries to play an important role in school library development made their own suggestions on the basis of this draft policy document. In an IFLA (International Federation of Library Associations) conference in 2000 another document was presented: *A way forward for co-operation between school and public libraries: draft National Guidelines for the co-operation between school and public libraries in South Africa* (2000). Many of the suggestions from the Policy Framework were used, but the angle was from the side of the public libraries. The different standpoints can have created confusion among politicians and decision makers.

In July 2000 you could again think that the policy was about to be approved by the government, when Kader Asmal, Minister of Education, mentioned the document in a speech:

“... What steps are we taking as a Department to meet these challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century? We have completed A National Policy Framework for School Library Standards and its four-year Implementation Plan. These documents make a series of proposals for the development of standards for school libraries. It also recognises that because of inherited inequities in the provision of libraries in our schools there is unlikely to be much money for developing traditional school libraries in every school. A variety of models for school libraries to choose from and a generic standard to conform to are recommended. Some of the models outlined in the document include:

- One school, one library
- One cluster of schools, one library
- One community, one library
- One region, one library service
- One learner, one library
- One lifelong learner, one library

The suggested policy will therefore be applicable to any type of a school library model. The aim is that learners have access to resources to meet the information needs of the curriculum.

We have also completed A National School Library Survey to give us an indication of how many schools have school libraries and to assist us in implementing the national policy of school library standards. I must say that the results of the survey give a grim picture.”  
[http://education.pwv.gov.za/Media/Speeches\\_2000/July\\_2000/Dav\\_Philips\\_Sowetan.htm](http://education.pwv.gov.za/Media/Speeches_2000/July_2000/Dav_Philips_Sowetan.htm) (Retrieved 05-07-05)

According to one of my regional informants, who were involved in the writing of the Policy Framework, the unit within the Educational Department that was supposed to work with the policy was closed down. This was not reflected in the speeches made. In spite of all the good intentions and a new speech at the IASL conference in Durban 2003, the policy had not been finalised, as mentioned on p. 4. As I have understood it the document has gone through different draft versions. For this thesis I have used the first draft document.

In 2004, The National Council for LIS (the Library and Information Sector) was launched, eight years after the idea was first discussed. The Council aims to advise both the Ministers of Arts and Culture and the Minister of Education on matters relating to the development and co-ordination of LIS. (*Education*. South Africa Yearbook 2004/2005) Maybe this council has had an impact now when the school library policy document is on the agenda again. The formulations in the South Africa Yearbook about school libraries are almost exactly the same text as that of The Policy Framework.

(In a conference in Bloemfontein in March 2005 the holder of a new post with responsibility for these questions on the national level was presented. He promised to meet with representatives from the provinces and make out a final plan. The new Minister of Education had received a delegation wanting to get an answer and now something finally /hopefully/ was to be done about school libraries in the National Educational Department. The latest news from my informants in Gauteng is that a new version from 2005 now is being sent through the mills of bureaucracy.)

To investigate what has happened during these years, I felt that I needed to know more about how policies are made and the role of government policy making in changing the development of education in a country. When I searched for information about this I found that a South African researcher had been investigating just what I was looking for. Sophia le Roux has been studying these questions for many years. Her article *School library policy in*

*South Africa: where do we stand?* (Roux, 2002) gives an overview of what had happened until that year.

In her text she uses an article about shaping policies, by the Canadian professor Benjamin Levin: *Conceptualizing the process of education reform from an international perspective* in the scholarly journal *Education policy analysis archives*, 9(14)  
<http://epaa.asu.edu/epaa/v9n14.html> (retrieved 2005-08-21)

I will use Le Roux's article and her references on the subject of policy making, because they point at the many ingredients that are involved in development of policy, which I wanted to study.

Policy can be defined as

“a definite course or method of action selected from among alternatives and in light of given conditions to guide and determine present and future decision, and also: a high-level overall plan embracing the general goals and acceptable procedures especially of a governmental body.”  
(Merriam-Webster's 2002, cited in Roux 2002)

This is what the suggestion for a Policy Framework for school library standards really can be defined to be. It gives many alternatives for decision makers in provinces and schools not to be bound to engagements that are not possible to fulfil. One of the problems might be that it has not really chosen a definite course or method of action, but gives several alternative suggestions for action.

“Levin points out that policy making involves some series of stages moving from the identification of a problem through the identification or adoption of particular strategies, to issues of implementation and impact. He (Levin 2001:3) identifies the following four stages in the education policy making process.

1. Origins. Where did particular policy proposals come from? How did they become part of the government agenda? What role did various stakeholders and interest groups play in the development of the policy?
2. Adoption. How do policies as finally adopted or made into law differ from those originally proposed? What factors lead to changes between proposals and approval? Who supported and proposed various policies, and to what effect?
3. Implementation. What model of implementation, if any, did governments use to implement their policy? What policy instruments (e.g. legislation, regulation, funding, capacity building, professional development, reorganisation and transformation) were used to support policy initiatives? How did schools and school systems respond to the policy guidelines?
4. Outcomes. How have the policy initiatives affected learner outcomes and learning processes in schools?

Levin (2001:5) points to the fact that at every step of policy making, multiple and conflicting influences come to bear, purposes change or are worn down by existing structures and processes, and circumstances alter in ways that require modification of plans and actions. He emphasises that the entire process of policy development and implementation takes place in a short-term context that is constantly changing, multi-faceted, and very difficult to read and is also affected by long-term trends in government and society. Finally, he (Levin 2001:6) points out that most of the time, governments are operating under circumstances that are far from optimal due to pressures of time, lack of information, and multiple competing issues.” (Roux 2002)

“In analysing policy matters, Levin believes that one should consider not only the ways in which policies are driven by a particular logic or ideology, but also the ways in which they are shaped by other factors — historical, cultural, institutional, and political (Levin 2001:6). This is particularly the case in South Africa, where school library policy making must be seen within the context of the transformation process which the education system, as well as the library and information services (LIS) sector, have undergone during the recent transition from a racist apartheid-based society to a non-racial democracy.” (Roux 2002)

Le Roux continues to show how other researchers describe the complexity of the policymaking process and how many different interests are involved. I think these questions are very interesting, but they take a long time to investigate and understand. My wish would have been, if I had had the time and possibility, to investigate this more in relation to school library policy in South Africa the last three years after Le Roux’s article.

What I could see was that The Policy Framework had only come to the second and maybe some part of the third stage of Levin’s stages, though I did not succeed in getting hold of any implementation strategy. It has been difficult to contact national authorities.

One interesting angle that I have found is the development of the institutions or associations for library staff in South Africa, the staff, which is one of the main stakeholders in my investigation. This development is described in a paper from a LIASA (Library and Information Association of South Africa) conference in 2004. In his paper *Status of LIS in South Africa since 1994: A transformation or Deformation?* Mphalane Moses Makhura (2004) reports about the turbulence on the scene of library associations, Educational Governments, public libraries and other places where librarians are employed or enlisted. It is not easy for an outsider to evaluate how this development within institutions and associations has effected development of e.g. education policy. But there have been many changes since 1994 and this has probably had an effect on how soon draft policy documents come to be approved and made to law. Another LIASA-paper says:

“The librarians themselves had to change their mindset about their associations which were divided along racial lines. They are now united under one non-racial library association. LIASA is only seven years old but has made great strides in uniting the profession and moving us from isolation to a global partner through IFLA.” (More, 2004)

As my time and (non-existent) budget do not allow that I dig deeper into associations and policymaking, I just reflect on some of the lines, suggested in Le Roux’s article, which also can be somewhat enlightened by my own project. One of these is the importance of different levels in society. The national level introduces and decides on policy, but often the responsibility of implementation lies on the provincial and local level. In the chapter about the different levels and in the section about my findings in the interviews with provincial officers I will reflect on what different levels could mean to the development of school libraries.

Another line is the historical background, mentioned in the previous chapter. In the next chapter I will give some theoretical background to education, libraries and especially school libraries in relation to development and to the synonyms transformation and change. – In my concluding remarks I reflect on a discussion of these concepts from aspects in a paper at the conference about e-learning I had the opportunity to participate in.

## **Theoretical background**

### **Education and development**

“Knowledge and information are the keys” – this statement I have heard many times from South Africans and other people involved in development projects or seen when I have been reading policy papers. Talking about ICT and global development at a UNESCO conference, Manuel Castells also used these words (Castells, 2000). From his three-band study of the Information Age and also in the book *The Internet Galaxy* he has concluded that education and the knowledge of and access to information technology are “prerequisites for overcoming equality” (Castells 2001, p. 248). But he has also found that

“Human resources are critical, in fact, this is the essential infrastructure, without which technology means nothing. The new economy is a peoplebased economy. This means education. But education is not the same thing as the warehousing of children. The key issues are the training of teachers, and the reform of the school system into a new pedagogy adapted to the Information Age.” (Castells, 2000)

South Africa has adopted these thoughts. Plans for introducing information technology in schools has been issued, as mentioned in the first chapter. Several projects have started,

equipping schools with computers. The government has issued a *White Paper on E-Education*. (Department of Education, 2004) Here the hope is to create digital libraries to provide access to “high quality, relevant and diverse resources, beyond what current school libraries are providing” – the school libraries, which hardly exist! (More about this White paper on p.22 and p.43)

But how is the technology connected to the human resources? If the information technology and the Internet is going to “be an ideal instrument to further democracy...”(Castells 2001, p. 155), it is more than computers and technology that is needed.

As I and many others, believing in school libraries as a tool for enhanced education, think, there is a need for a diversity of learning material, books for training and reading pleasure, non-fiction for exploring many different views of reality, encyclopaedias not only for direct fact finding, but also edited for children’s browsing among vast amounts of knowledge. You need a reading habit, to be used to find suitable texts, evaluate them and use them for your own needs. A school library with a teacher librarian is well suited for this kind of activity, helping teachers and children to find suitable material.

The children (and the teachers) can soon be computer literate and then they need to be “information literate”. The concept “information literacy” is not new:

“The idea of information literacy, emerging with the advent of information technologies in the early 1970s, has grown, taken shape and strengthened to become recognized as the critical literacy for the twenty-first century. Sometimes interpreted as one of a number of literacies, information literacy is also described as the overarching literacy essential for twenty-first century living. Today, information literacy is inextricably associated with information practices and critical thinking in the information and communication technology environment.” (Bruce, 2002).

School libraries could be important agents in the understanding and teaching of information literacy in several respects, if they are used as agents in schools with a learner-centred pedagogy, promoting democracy and human development, against inequality and social exclusion. This means for the schools not only to integrate information technology, but also to teach and work with different media, oral and written stories and literacy interpreted in several ways, including information literacy. You must learn to be critical and observant to aims and origin of sources, choose among an abundance of information and make use of it for your own needs, work with it and present it, making it your own knowledge.

The school education should “move away from the dominant paradigm of prepackaging information” (Breivik, 1998 in Bruce, p. 5), where the teacher is the only authority, sometimes with the help of one textbook. An investigation in 1999 even showed that in South Africa “very few teachers are using textbooks in their classes in any systematic way. This was even the case when textbooks were available at schools.” (Le Roux, p.9)

Maybe this was a misunderstanding of how the new curriculum goals in the new learner-centred and independent teaching should be carried out? Curriculum 2005 and The Revised Curriculum Statement promotes a use of diverse learning material and according to my experience schools can now access textbooks, recommended on lists from government departments. Sometimes the books don't come on time, but this problem is being looked at.

But as Le Roux also has noticed, in many of the official documents school libraries are not mentioned as a way of providing diverse learning material and old educational methods have a tendency to linger on. To be able to change this paradigm, a global approach of changing education into a more critical, reflective and reality-oriented education is needed. Sustainable partnerships between teachers, information specialists, nationally and internationally in “curriculum design, policy development, staff development, research and classroom teaching” (Bruce, p. 13) could in the long run be able to bring about a change. School library and staff can play a vital role in cooperating with teachers and students to find appropriate material, helping them to compare different media, promote the use of government and private projects of digital learning material and databases, plan student-centred learning and thus being an important and active facilitator for learning.

### **Theories of the pedagogical role of the school library in relation to teaching and learning**

As this thesis is not primarily written for librarians or an audience with special knowledge about schools and libraries, but for my fellow students and teachers in the Communication for Development course, I will relate some research about school libraries and the concept of school library. In her book *Skolbibliotekets pedagogiska roll – en kunskapsöversikt* (The pedagogical role of school libraries – a research overview) Limberg points at different definitions of school libraries. She led me to an English study of the pedagogical role of the

school library, where Streatfield & Markless (1994) give a definition that both takes into account all sorts of school libraries and points to the fact that a school library has a relation to the view of the school on teaching and learning:

The school library represents

- a set of (implicit or explicit) choices made by the school about the extent of central provision and exploitation of its own and other resources within (and sometimes beyond) the school,  
(My interpretation: A school makes – consciously or not - a choice to utilize and to have or not to have a library and information service and how to provide and use different teaching and learning material)

and the school library also represents

- the base at the school within which the librarian (if any) works or from which the librarian operates across and beyond the school (Streatfield & Markless, 1994 p. 104)  
(My interpretation: If the school has a /teacher/librarian he or she works in the school library and together with all people in the school and networks all over the school and the library and information sector)

With these definitions many “libraries” in schools are not libraries. Many schools have not made outspoken choices or the conditions have changed over time so that the initial plans for the function of a school library cannot be fulfilled. In some schools all the teachers or a group share the responsibility to manage the library, together with a coordinating teacher. Where Streatfield & Markless wanted to investigate functioning school libraries, representing their definition, I aimed also to look for other kinds of library service that was suggested in The Policy Framework, e.g. classroom collections and regional school library service.

Streatfield & Markless problematize some qualitative research on school libraries done earlier in Great Britain. The research often reflects the more or less explicit assumption that the school library does contribute in a significant way to learning. This matter has not been examined in depth, they mean. In some research made, the emphasis has been upon good practice in the library itself rather than on how it has supported learning. (ibid p. 9)

The authors show that it is not an easy task to get an answer to what students learn with the help of school libraries. When they talk about the learning as “invisible” (as in the title of the book) they illustrate this by their own experience, observing in a school library: the students come in unruly hordes like warriors, storming into the library and then camp out in groups with what they find. It is not easy to monitor individual use of the school library under these

conditions, which are a fairly common pattern of library use by classes (ibid p. 3-4). One way of finding out if they learn anything is to ask them. This has been done e.g. in the study from USA that I refer to in the next section.

Streatfield & Markless (1994) focus their study on in what way the library can contribute to teaching and learning. The question what contribution a specific school library makes to its school is not easy to answer. It depends on so many different things. There might not be a consensus of teaching methods in the school; different teachers or departments have different educational approaches.

“The library is sometimes seen as a way of ‘opening up’ the school to more flexible teaching methods and as a natural centre for cross curriculum activity within the school – but this raises the question of *how* the library should foster this sort of change and *how much greater* the additional resources will be that are required to support this transformation.” (ibid p. 135)

These examples show that there are many issues beyond the existence of a school library room in a school that must also be taken into consideration in studying the role of library and information service in a school.

For my study I could not expect to take so many of those issues into consideration, but I would like to use Streatfield & Markless’ experience and look for some specific signs that can suggest what kind of learning is taking place with the use of the school library. I will look into their study and define some important indicators that can be used. They also give advice for further development and I will follow their example and try to find some actions that I can recommend.

Some of the key determinants are (inspired by Streatfield & Markless):

- teachers’ attitudes and behaviour; teamworking
- resources to meet curriculum demands, e.g.
  - media (incl. ICT)
  - space
  - access
  - staff; time
- the school culture and ethos; vision and consensus of teaching and learning; goals, aims and objectives
- support from management
- the National Curriculum (and policy)

I wanted to use as many as possible of these determinants and factors in my study and tried to integrate them in my interview questions.

## **A recent school library study in USA**

In the study *Student Learning Through Ohio School Libraries*, by professors Carol Kuhlthau and Ross Todd, USA, more than 13 000 students in grades 3 to 12 were asked if school libraries and their services help them to become better learners. The focus question was: How do school libraries help students with their learning in and away from school? From 75 to 99 % thought that it helped them in different ways. The study showed that students and faculty recognized that school libraries helped students with their learning in many ways across the various grade levels. Teachers valued the school library and saw it playing an important role in student learning, particularly in terms of using computers, finding and locating information, and using information to complete assignments. Students also rated these three areas of help very highly. (Todd, 2005)

From 10,000 written responses to the question to the students **if they could remember a time when the school library really helped them**, the researchers found qualitative data that show that school libraries engaged actively as learning instructional centres. The results show that a school library can facilitate students through a school librarian who is actively engaged in using information to construct knowledge.

The researchers recommend schools to place a stronger emphasis on instruction and learning in their library programs. The library staff should promote action, showed successful in this study, like the students' independent searching for diverse resources, reading, construction of knowledge, individualized learning and literacy.

This American investigation from schools with very good resources cannot be directly applicable to South African conditions. It shows though that a school library with a school librarian can play a vital role. In my study I intended to investigate what possibilities the school libraries I visited had to fulfil the recommendations to play a role in learning and literacy. Though my investigation is very limited I thought it would be interesting to ask some learners and teachers if they could mention a situation, when the school library service really helped them and to find out if the school libraries play such a role in the schools.

When visiting the schools I thought I would probably also see other roles that the school library can play, e.g. being a place for reading and recreation and for different cultural experiences through exhibitions and storytelling and other functions.

## **Research questions and method**

In this Communication for Development project my key questions are:

***How can school libraries be used to improve the new teaching and learning in schools?***

***What is happening with school library policy in South Africa?***

The concept of school libraries is discussed in the chapter *The pedagogical role of the school library in relation to teaching and learning* (above). I did not make any restrictions to what I would call a school library. My anticipation was that the schools I had chosen had centralised school libraries

In the concept “new teaching and learning” I include outcomes based education (OBE) as in the new curriculum that is being implemented in South Africa (see below), a learner centred, problem-based education with many different sources of information. Which role does the library play in this educational process? What kind of teaching and learning material and media do the schools use?

In order to find answers to my questions used a multi-method approach:

- Observing and interviewing in two schools and their school library, collecting plans and other documents
- Interviews with regional staff and participating in meetings and a conference
- Literature review and document analysis

For the interviews I made different interview guides for the different categories of interviewees, inspired by Kvale’s book *The Qualitative Research Interview* (Kvale, 1996). The interviews were semi-structured. Some of the questions were repeated in all the interviews (see teacher’s interview guide in the appendix).

To find out about national and provincial school library policy my aim was also to investigate what had happened to the document *National Policy Framework for School Library*

*Standards* through putting these questions to my findings and look for documents explaining its story:

- Is the policy framework known in the schools?
- Are any of its ideas used? Which ideas?
- How is the policy applied and with what effect?
- Which ideas have been dropped and why?

Another interesting question is:

- Has the LPYL project left any traces?

## **Different levels of society: national, provincial and local or school level**

### **The national level**

My investigation involved several levels of the South African society. The national government and the national educational department design policies and laws as a way to transform and reform the society. One of the tools for changing education is in all countries changes in the curriculum. Curriculum 2005 was the new curriculum that was introduced in the schools in 1998. It was based on concepts from modern pedagogical theories used in other parts of the world, e.g. USA and New Zealand. One of the concepts was an outcomes-based approach to teaching and learning. (Outcomes-based Education - OBE):

“OBE regards learning as an interactive process between and among educators and learners. The focus is on what learners should know and be able to do (knowledge, skills, attitudes and values). It places strong emphasis on co-operative learning, especially group work involving common tasks. The goal is to produce active and lifelong learners with a thirst for knowledge and a love of learning.” (South Africa Yearbook 2004/2005)

The democratic South African governments elected in 1994 and later, have faced major challenges in implementing new plans for educational change. The apartheid denied the vast majority access to quality education. Curriculum 2005 and the new education and training policy promote equity, high quality and accessibility for all learners. But the new curriculum was not easy to implement. Many teachers were not enough trained and the workshops offered were not so efficient. This was the background of the Revised Curriculum Statement, which the teachers now said they had recently been studying when I visited the schools.

The Revised Curriculum was to be phased in, starting with Grades R to 3 in 2004. The Revised Curriculum Statement is said to be much simpler to work with and provides more

guidance to teachers about expectations and standards. In addition, a teacher's guide has been prepared, which assists the educator in developing appropriate learning programmes to achieve the specified outcomes. A national core team provided training to officials from every province, including curriculum specialists, subject advisers and other key staff. They, in turn, have been training school principals, who are expected to provide instructional leadership in their schools and to educators. (South Africa Yearbook 2004/2005) Several of the teachers I interviewed found the teacher's guide useful and one said that the Revised Curriculum was easier to understand than the previous one, but several still seemed to be confused by all the new instructions.

The national government issues policy documents or White papers and the provinces have to implement those plans. Sometimes the state money is not enough and "other innovative sources" have to be added to the budget through NGOs or private companies. When *The White Paper on E-education* (Department of Education, 2004) should be implemented from 2004, the national Education Department signed agreements with Microsoft and Symantec. (*Education*. South Africa Yearbook 2004/2005) This was not fully supported by everyone. I could hear some comments about being depending on multinational companies. It could prove to be vulnerable in the future.

The library and information services (LIS) sector is divided between the national and provincial Educational Departments and the Departments of Arts and Culture (the name of this department is different in different provinces). School libraries are the responsibility of the former department and public libraries belong to the latter. This situation is common in many countries and can sometimes create problems of coordination.

### **The provincial level**

The nine provinces have their own educational departments, which distribute state money, make up provincial plans, govern, train and give guidance to the schools. The provincial level seems to be as important as the national level for development of the South African society. The national government often works by deciding policy frameworks that the provincial governments then have to carry out. Sometimes the provinces work on their own, making their own policies. Often it is very important what persons hold the different posts. A dynamic person can play an important role in the development. Several informants talked about a very

dynamic person in one province who had succeeded to develop the school library policy in her province better than others. Another important factor in her work was said to be the support from superiors.

In the case of the provincial Educational Government in Gauteng they have a big Educational Library in Pretoria. Gauteng is the smallest province, but it has around 8 million inhabitants with Johannesburg and Pretoria as the main cities. Soweto is a cluster of townships situated south west of Johannesburg. Gauteng is divided into eleven educational districts and almost all of them have a school library facilitator.

The second province I visited was Western Cape Province, with Cape Town as the main city. The Educational Library and Information Service of Western Cape (EDULIS) is situated in Cape Town. Western Cape is divided into seven areas, rural and urban. EDULIS is supposed to have seven advisors of school libraries and seven advisors for information literacy – not all are appointed. I did not get information about what the advisors for information literacy was doing. EDULIS has network meetings with the advisors and workshops once a quarter.

### **The local or school level: Role of the SGB, principals and other individuals**

“The implementation of standards for school libraries is, however, a provincial matter. Both the national and provincial departments of education should therefore co-ordinate their efforts in making improvements in the provision of school library services. ... Although school libraries are not mentioned specifically in the South African Schools Act, 1996 (Act No. 84 of 1996), this Act impacts on the delivery of school library services as a result of the functions assigned to school governing bodies (SGBs). Section 36 of the Act imposes a responsibility on all SGBs of public schools to do their utmost to improve the quality of education in their schools by raising additional resources to supplement those which the state provides from public funds. This implies budgeting for any school library model that, according to the SGB and the school, would be the most suitable one for their local needs.” (National Committee for Library Co-operation 2000, cited in Roux 2002)

On the local level, in every school, SGB is the governing body, with the principal, representatives for teachers, parents and in secondary schools also learners. After my visit to the schools I understood that it would have been interesting if I also had interviewed some members of the SGBs of the schools I visited. Unfortunately I did not get that possibility. The only mention of the SGB in the primary school library plan was that the SGB should audit the

finances of the library committee. One of the learners (boy, grade 7) also mentioned the SGB when I asked about who he thought decided about the school library. In the high school the principal mentioned the School Governing Council (/Body) as one of the committees where learners participate, but he did not talk about that in relation to the library. Therefore I don't know if the school governing body had any impact on the school libraries in the schools I visited. If I had known of the importance of the SGB in the legislation, I would have tried to get more information about its function in the schools.

According to some research in 1999 the SGBs were not always able to function the way the South African Schools Act intended. The SGB has a majority of elected representatives of parents or guardians of the learners. The provinces could not always provide adequate training for school governing body members. (van Wyk, 2000) But it had been very interesting to hear what problems the SGB gave priority and how they thought when it comes to provision of library and information resources. A library researcher I talked to, thought that the SGB had too much influence and that the regulations about them probably would be changed. It was a problem e.g. that SGBs often did not want to share resources with other more disadvantaged schools.

In van Wyk's paper I also found some interesting thoughts about the role of the principal. It is not always that the principal can share his power with other stakeholders. They can also be relying on instructions from the principal, so his leadership and encouragement of the SGB is very important. From my own experiences and other reports, I know that the role of the principal in the management of and conditions for the school library in a school always is very crucial. I have no signs of how the principals' relations to the SGBs functioned in the schools I visited, but the significant role of the principal was shown in several of my interviews. The teachers in the primary school seemed more inclined to wait for actions from the principal and the principal did not always know how things were working (or he did not tell). He also seemed to think that the school library committee would be able to keep the library service alive through alternating in managing it. But this was not my impression from the members of the school library committee.

The principal has a great role to play on the local level. He can influence his staff and recommend what areas to put most effort in. If he thinks a school library is very essential he should be able to raise funds for staffing a school library. He also influences through his cooperation with other institutions like the public library. Both principals in the schools I

visited were very positive to the service of the public libraries. But they seemed not to have thought of that the public library could not serve the learners with all help they needed.

Genivieve Hart has studied public libraries and their connections with schools as shown in a report from her doctoral studies: the public libraries can hand out information on demand, when teachers give the learners assignments, which they must solve with the help of public libraries. But the librarians in the public libraries cannot meet “the real needs of school learners”... “The reality is that neither public librarians nor teachers see librarians to be partners in the learning curriculum.” (Hart, 2005)

On the school level, as on all levels, engaged and persistent individuals with a vision, often is promoting development. The word in Swedish can be translated “fiery souls”. In South Africa one of them was called “a very dynamic lady” (– as in my interview in the appendix)! In both schools I visited there were such people. But in the primary school the dynamic lady had not coped with the great pressure from being both a full time teacher and a library manager. She did not get enough support from the school and then she had been appointed Head of department. She loved the library, but it had been too much work and too little time, when she also worked as a full time teacher. In the secondary school the teacher librarian also mentioned the pressure, but she had so far coped with the situation through the support she felt from the principal and the teachers. She also liked the job very much.

### **Visit to schools, interviews**

In the first two of my three weeks’ stay in South Africa I visited two school libraries that had been involved in the LPYL project, interviewed school library staff, teachers, principals and learners about attitudes to the school library and how it is used.

The selection of the schools was a long process. I asked for advice from people who had been engaged in the LPYL project and interviewed a friend and colleague from South Africa (Hell, 2004) and finally I decided to go to a school in her area and to another school, where I knew the teacher librarian from the LPYL project. The main criteria for choosing these schools were that they were both good examples from the old project, I had a wish to see them and it was probable that they still had some library activity to investigate. It was one primary school with grade R to 7 and one high school with grade 8 to 12 and I thought it would be interesting to visit the two different levels. The schools are both situated in disadvantaged areas, though

in two relatively wealthy provinces. In this thesis I call the schools “The Primary School” and “The High School” and when I use names, I have given the interviewees new names.

### **Design of interviews**

For the interviews I made different interview guides for the different categories of interviewees, inspired by Kvale’s book *The Qualitative Research Interview* (Kvale, 1996). The different interviewees were: learners, teachers, principal, teacher librarians and provincial educational library and information officers. (See appendix)

The interviews were semi-structured. Some of the questions were repeated in all the interviews (see the teacher’s interview guide in appendix). I was thinking of getting some quantitative information from the teachers: How often does the teacher use the library? Can the learners go to the library during lesson time, if they need material? How often do the learners go to the library? From school library staff information about opening hours, the time devoted to managing the library and how much the school library is used for the teaching and learning. But because my sample of different categories of interviewees is so small I have not used quantitative measures, tables or percentage. The result is shown through the discussion of the different aspects.

From the learners (I use this word in stead of pupils, students, since it is used in South African schools) and from the teachers I wanted to know how much they used the school library and how it helped them in their work – positive and negative experience and wishes for the future. I asked them if they could remember a time when the school library really helped them (from the study of Kulthau & Ross – see above p. 19).

From the principal I wanted to get some view of “the school culture and ethos; vision and consensus of teaching and learning; goals, aims and objectives;” and support for the school library (Streatfield & Markless, see also above p. 17)

- the principal’s view of the role of a school library
- if there is a library committee or any other teamwork in relation to the library;
- if there is any teaching in media and library use or information literacy.
- Introduction of ICT in the schools and if the library is involved in the introduction.
- Is the Outcomes Based Education (OBE) well known in the school and how is it working?

## **Interview themes**

The following themes were important in the interviews and in my observations:

### **How much and how is the school library used?**

What kind of collection and library type?

How long is it open?

How accessible is it for learners, for teachers?

What do they do in the library?

Is there cooperation between teachers and library staff?

What is missing in the library, suggestions for improvements?

**Attitudes to library use:** Do they think that a library is essential for education?

### **Teaching methods, pedagogy**

What curriculum support material do they use? Do they use different media?

Has the new curriculum had an impact on the teaching?

Do they in any way teach information literacy?

How can learners influence teaching and learning?

First I will give an overview of my findings from the interviews with the provincial staff. In the next chapter I summarize the results in the school interviews in the reports from the schools.

## **Findings from the interviews with the provincial staff**

Part of the fieldwork was aimed at interviewing and gathering data from other parties than the schools, like provincial (regional) educational authorities and staff and investigating attitudes and plans about school library development. I visited two provinces with their own provincial educational governments. From the provincial staff I got facts about their work.

In Gauteng Province, where The Primary School is situated, my contact persons for this project worked in the provincial Educational Department, so it was easy to interview them. I went to the office in Johannesburg each day of my visit for transport to the school. One of my contact persons is coordinator for the facilitators of school libraries and I made an interview with her. The other contact person is head of the Library and Information department of the Educational Department of Gauteng. She planned my visit, accommodation and transport for me in Johannesburg, in a way that was very convenient for me. She also made it possible for me to participate in a conference for school library people in the neighbouring province Free state, which by chance was scheduled to the last week of my project.

In the appendix I reproduce most of the interview with the coordinator of school library facilitators. This was my most comprehensive interview, which gave a broad picture of the situation for school libraries in Gauteng and of the work in the Educational Library and Information department with respect to school libraries. The coordinator had both negative and positive things to say about the development. From her point of view she pointed out some of the things her library department worked with as important. One was a possibility for the schools to get an award, if they made a report about their school library activities to the department, another the formation of networks on the district level and also other networking between different staff.

They also invited me to participate in a meeting with district school library facilitators in the Gauteng Educational Library in Pretoria, where they had their second work place. There I could talk to the facilitators and listen when they planned their work. Gauteng Province is divided into 12 districts and almost all of them have a school library facilitator who has the task of supporting the schools, and organizing workshops in their districts. They have up to about 200 schools each to work with. They have meetings together with the staff at the Library and Information department of Educational Department and also some other networking activities. At least one of them has started so-called cluster groups of school librarians. The school library coordinator has asked her to talk to the others and inspire them to do the same (Interview with Coordinator, 2005, See appendix). Networking is an important factor for development of the activities. The more experienced can help the new staff and inspire them to development work. They can also compare the different districts and communities and support school staff and tell them about progress in other parts of the province.

In Gauteng I also had the opportunity to participate in an educational event for teacher librarians in one of the districts. It was held in a library owned by the American Embassy, which sponsored the event and tried an online lecture from USA by an American school librarian. The coordinator also talked about school library management and one of the teacher librarians told about his school, where the principal had succeeded in getting funds for a school library and other facilities at his school from American and South African companies. He recommended the others to try the same solution to their financial problems and also involve parents in finding sponsors.

From my (Swedish) point of view there are problems like fear of dependence and undue influence with sponsoring from private companies, but this kind of funding is normal in South Africa. Already at my first visit to the country I observed that companies often sponsored schools and that it was seen as natural that they should contribute to development and educate children. I suppose this is another way to get money than to impose high taxes on the domestic companies. As far as foreign companies and countries are involved, South Africa is still a donor dependant country and my impression is that this is not diminishing. In my interview with the South African librarian, studying in Sweden, I understood that it was a very important skill to be able to write project applications to donors. (Hell. 2004)

The second province I visited was Western Cape Province. The Educational Department of Western Cape is situated in Cape Town and I did not have a possibility to visit the staff there. But I used a couple of hours one day to contact them by phone. I talked to the head of the Educational Library and Information Service of Western Cape (EDULIS). She was involved in the LPYL project, when we had met each other, and now she told me that they are still struggling and fighting for school libraries in their 1600 schools. Western Cape is since 2001 divided into seven educational districts and they have resource centres around the province. They are supposed to have seven advisors for school libraries and seven advisors for information literacy – not all are appointed. They have meetings with them and workshops once a quarter. The centre in George, not far from Knysna, where I was, was being expanded and would be launched as a new centre in April this year. In the provincial office they have a person responsible for coordinating the advisors of school libraries and they have meetings every quarter. The department was working with policy documents of education and there was a hope that they would soon get something about school libraries, because the chief director for curriculum development was interested.

I got the name and number of the teacher librarian working at the resource centre in George, so I could talk to him by phone. He told me that he was now involved developing a school library in a high school. He went there for a period one afternoon every week. He also organized workshops, marketed the resources and visited schools. Next term he would be visiting the Knysna region. In Cape Town and in the centre in George the teachers could get two weeks loans. They had material to support the curriculum, 1800 videos included. The membership is free and they can make reservations by post, phone or SMS. He thought that it was difficult to get hold of books in Xhosa, but they had some Xhosa books in Cape Town.

The teachers can bring the material back to George or send it through curriculum advisors or other officers, coming to the schools from George.

## **Reports from two schools and two school libraries**

### **The Primary School**

The first week I was in a Primary School in Gauteng Province, which is a grade R to grade 7 (black) school. R means Reception year where they begin when they are around 6 years old and in grade 7 they are around 12-13 years. The school is situated in a township in Soweto, Johannesburg – with a high rate of unemployment and poor families. The principal said:

“/The economy of the school/ is poor. All schools in the area are poor. The situation has not changed in the latest years. We have lots of unemployment. /This/ is one of the oldest townships in South Africa. As a result it is full of old people. The children who come here come from homes where they are looked after by their grannies. That’s a problem.”

The Primary School had 16 classes with 36-59 learners in each, totally about 730 learners. A public library was situated only five minutes walk from the school.

The majority of the learners spoke Zulu, a few of them Sotho and Xhosa. The teaching language is English and Zulu was taught as additional language. In the foundation phase, which is year R-3, they spoke Zulu most often in class and when the learners got older the teachers tried to use more English. When I was in grade 3, they read aloud to me from English storybooks, but did not speak much. One of the teachers who had grade 3 said that she used to speak English one day and Zulu the next. They had only language textbooks in Zulu in the school, no other books in Zulu.

In The Primary School I interviewed six learners, four teachers (the old and the new teacher librarian included) and the principal. I was sitting in the library most of the time, waiting for interviews. At other times I was invited to participate in classrooms, mostly in the foundation phase. The children read aloud to me and performed small plays, dramatized from book stories and songs. I also watched them work with the current theme Healthy food. In grade 3 those children who could, had brought pictures from home and others made clippings from magazines in the classroom. The teacher looked if what they had chosen was healthy and then they put it in different food sections on the wall as an exhibition.

In grade R I observed when the 42 children worked in groups in the classroom with one teacher. One group was sitting in a ring with books in their hands. They were supposed to show each other pictures from the (English) picture books from their classroom collection and tell what they saw. It was a way of learning how to treat a book, because some of them did not know. The other groups were working with numeracy or mathematics (building with blocks), arts (paper clippings) and life skills (playing that they were a family). To me it seemed very difficult to act as a teacher in this class, but it worked.

Wandering around the school on my own I also went into one of the computer rooms (they had two) and found technical staff working with the computers, which was not in use at the moment. They had been online for a while and they should have access to Internet, Microsoft software including Encarta Encyclopaedia. There had been some problems with burglary and vandalism from the outside.

The library consisted of two rooms. The first room with the entrance was a reading room with a lot of diplomas for reading and library on the walls that the school had achieved previously. It was furnished with tables and chairs and no books. There was also a computer and a TV. The computer was not connected to the network. This room was used by the new teacher librarian and for committee meetings after school. The second room next to it was full with shelves and many books in an order that was difficult for me to see. There were both newer and very old books. There were some reference books near to the entrance and some books about animals and plants that I could see some of the learners looking in. There was a library desk that was not in use. One of the teachers had a working place in a corner of the room.

I was told that the library committee was working with the library and reorganizing it. They had moved books into the classrooms to have what they call a book box library in each classroom. Some teachers in the intermediate phase talked about learners who had helped to pick out suitable books for their class. This work was ongoing and they were trying to find forms how this should function and they had appointed learners as monitors of the book boxes in the classes. Teachers in the intermediate phase sometimes sent learners to the library to use reference books. They said that they were not allowed to take them from the library, but I don't think they stuck to that always. I could see that some books were taken to the classrooms. Then it might be difficult to find them again, if the teachers are not very careful registering them. It seemed to be a danger that this library could be scattered throughout the school, maybe beyond control.

The library door was open all day and some learners and teachers went there now and then, but mostly the library was empty. It seemed to me as a library with a great potential, but the school had not found a solution how to manage the order and make it a usable reference library. They were waiting for a library computer program that could also be used as a literacy program and hoping for someone to work with it. The library committee was struggling to find a solution and everyone I talked to, was very positive to the library and wanted it to be better, but did not know how. One of the teachers (Johnny, grade 5-7) said:

“School library is very essential for education. Sometimes the teachers’ guides they have not enough. If you have a library it can reinforce. ... When we have HIV/AIDS for instance. When we have a function about AIDS. There are lots of books. We need more information. Reading as such, class material on science, I want more. I come here and take some, it is a big necessity. ... We know that we must have a library. But we don’t have the librarian skills.”

Several years ago they had decided to move the fiction into the classrooms as box libraries. They had scheduled a reading lesson every day after lunch, so it was good to have the books in the classrooms. They intended to change the books now and then. But as I understood they had not yet worked out a suitable system how to manage this. It seemed to me that the system with classroom collections functioned in the foundation phase, at least according to the former teacher librarian, but in the intermediate phase it was not yet fully implemented.

Previous years they had got many books from the organization READ that cooperated with the school earlier. They had got very much help from them. But it was some year ago. Now READ works through the provincial departments, my contact in the Educational department of Gauteng told me.<sup>3</sup> The books were now used very much, especially in the foundation phase. One of the teachers said that READ did not have so much for the bigger children.

The library committee now had the intention also to make classroom boxes for different subjects, get all the educators involved in taking responsibility for the library and with the help of learner involvement, technology and fundraising get it on foot again. The whole

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<sup>3</sup> READ Educational Trust is a non-government educational organisation that has been active in South Africa for 26 years. It is funded by private sector and foreign donors and works together with the Education Departments in all the nine provinces. READ conducts literacy programme to previously disadvantaged groups throughout the country. Recently it finished Learning for Living – a five-year project driven by the Department of Education, to deliver classroom materials and in-service training to educators in nearly 900 schools across all nine provinces. The organisation is also promoting reading activities, e.g. READATHON, a national literacy campaign every year. (<http://www.read.org.za/> retrieved 2005-08-01)

school worked with the same theme. Now it was Healthy living and the next theme would be Transport and communications.

Some of the older children came to the library when I was sitting there waiting for interviews. They were looking for some information, books for the class or for a book to read. Mostly there was no one there to help them, though the doors were open. Some textbooks and exercise books were also kept in the library. To me the library seemed to be in a mess with books in no order, even on the floor. Some new books were unpacked. "I think the library is beautiful, but not now. I try to pick up books. It is difficult to find books in the library", one girl in grade 7 told me. But some of the children I interviewed said that they could find books. They did not use the school library so much, but they would like more books in the library and some of them said that they liked to sit in the library.

The school had a library committee with many teachers. They had been working in weekends in the library, they told me. They had been trying to sort out the books for a long time. The library committee members were responsible for the library together including the teacher librarian and the principal. The old teacher librarian, whom I knew from the LPYL project, was no longer in charge. She was now Head of the foundation phase department and was supposed to instruct the new teacher librarian. He had struggled to get help from all the teachers to get a grip of what books were available in the library and to separate them in different categories. For that purpose he had written an elaborated proposal a year ago. He had been trying since 2004 to get the library service to function according to the wishes of the staff. The library committee was supposed to get it working. But the members thought it was too much work for them and took too much of their time with the learners. The involvement of all the teachers according to his proposal might not have succeeded fully. It had not been possible to make a new teacher schedule for the library.

Several of the teachers mentioned that they would like to have a full time teacher librarian. The new working teacher librarian also talked about the role of the principal. He could maybe raise funds for this. The teacher librarian says:

"It should be only one teacher or an unemployed librarian. It should be someone that was responsible. That would be very good, in the case of only one teacher. That was one of the suggestions that we put forward for the committee. There are library students in Johannesburg, who could help... But there is no funding for that."

When I asked about teaching information literacy and explained what I meant, Stanley talked about the tsunami:

“Recently I saw in my classes, one of the educators – there was so much about the tsunami in the papers. They were not aware of it. The educator in the class said – o, the tsunami...! I collected some of the articles. The other teachers said: Can you get it? I said: Yes I can. I should have used the computers, but that time it was something wrong with the computers. They couldn’t go. I felt so bad. We didn’t have the password... The children should have liked to have more information. Then I used The Star, the paper. – We have it here, but with my own, I take it from my home and take the articles with me. But it was not enough. I want to know more.”

The teacher librarian talked about how the learners can use the library:

“On television ABC3 - National Geographic, we encourage them to see that program on Sundays. On Monday we debate that and then they rush to the library to find more information.”

Some of the teachers knew about the service from the educational library in Pretoria, but they did not use it much. When I told them of my visit there they said that they might want to use the service more. The principal said:

“The people running that resource centre should go down to the schools and show what they have. You cannot order anything you don’t know”.

In previous years the school had got help from one of the public librarians, who came to the school and helped them with the library and storytelling. Now she was not there. The Public Library had not had the possibility to continue the service to the same extent. The school cooperated with The Public Library in several respects. The principal encouraged the learners to go to the library and could provide them with library cards. The library arranged national and regional reading campaigns and competitions<sup>4</sup> in reading every year for schools and of course assisted learners who came to the library to get information or reading. In the library outreach there were about 12 primary schools and 5 high schools. The learners in the school told me that they used to go to The Public Library. One of them also went to another library when he went to his dad, who lived in another part of Soweto.

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<sup>4</sup> Sponsored projects in Joburg's libraries:

# The "Want to Read Project" sponsored by the Carnegie Corporation /American grantmaking foundation/ is aimed at developing a culture of reading in primary schools. The project includes the "Story Skirmish", an inter-school knockout quiz for second-language English speakers in standards two and three in the greater Johannesburg area. The Carnegie sponsorship also allows the CJLIS /Johannesburg's libraries/ to train five young librarians over a three-year period

# De Beers /mining company/ sponsors a similar quiz, called "Battle of the Books", for children in grades six and seven. At present it involves 48 schools in the greater Johannesburg area. The knockout quiz focuses on set books, half of which are South African. The aim is to bring about interaction between children, schools and libraries. Heinemann Publishers, Oxford University Press and Exclusive Books sponsor the prizes.  
<http://www.johannesburg.gov.za/services/libraries1.stm>

The school had recently installed 23 new computers for learners from grade 6 and one computer for the teachers. This was their second computer room, the other computers that they got two years ago were said to be too old for the new programmes. It was a part of the provincial project Gauteng Online that should provide computers for 45 schools in the province and training to use them. Now the new teacher librarian together with another teacher was also in charge of the implementation of the new computers in the school and that took a vast amount of his time. One of the days when I was there, he had also been the secretary of the SGB (school governing body) meeting and not left the school until half past seven.

### **Attitudes to library use**

When I was in the school the library was being reorganized. It seemed difficult to find information in there, but still some learners and teachers said that they liked it and used it. I also saw a few of them use it during my stay.

The library committee members were trying to find solutions to the problems of managing the library. The teachers would very much like the library to be better. The two who had been most active in its management were now busy with other things and the former teacher librarian was tired and thought it was too much work both to be a teacher and responsible for the library. No one I talked to questioned the existence of a library, but it seemed very difficult to get their system to work with an alternating schedule for the teachers to be in charge and help in the library. But still this was for them the only solution in sight.

They wanted to try to a system with book boxes even in different subjects. But they tried to find a way of organising that properly. Many of them would have liked to have a teacher librarian, but they did not know how to get one, though they had some suggestions for temporary solutions. Very much I think it depended on the principal and raising funds. The principal seemed to wait for the provincial department to come with a library post or else the teachers in the library committee to manage the library themselves. The principal would have welcomed intervention from the Educational department. He said:

“There is no willingness to treat it /the library/ as a priority. It should be treated as a priority. There should also be a teacher librarian in the budget. ... The post is not there. We don't have a say how many posts is there. ... It is a policy matter. The department comes with a policy – not us.”

The implementation of ICT also required a great effort of the school and the library had come somewhat behind and was not yet integrated in this new investment. Though they had some plans for a library programme in the future and there was a computer in the library, it did not seem to be part of the ICT plan for the school.

## The High School

“I like to read, I read poems, books about the past, everything about nature, about animals. I read every day, every night. I like to read. ... I borrow books here at the school library or at the library in /the location/. Monday, Wednesday, Saturday. Because it's a library near me. When I'm lonely I go to the library to do my homework and to read. ... I come to the school library every week, sometimes every day, when I'm lonely and when I don't have any lunch money. I must come on Thursdays, because then it is my library day as a library helper.”  
(Boy in grade 9)



Library helpers

The High School in Western Cape Province is a school situated on a hill overlooking the beautiful lagoon in the city of Knysna some kilometres away. It has 1100 (black) learners from grade 8 to grade 12 and 32 teachers. It is not unusual with around 50 learners in one class. They come to The High School from different primary schools in an area of many small villages or locations on hills. It is a rural area and some of the learners have begun school late, so their ages range from 13 to 23 years.

In this school I interviewed six learners (five girls, one boy), five teachers and the principal. I made most of the interviews in the library, one teacher and the principal I interviewed in their offices. The teacher librarian was my guide in the school and I followed her most of the time, also some of her English lessons in the classroom, when I also answered questions from the learners. (I delivered some letters to grade 8 written by children in my own school in Sweden, which they answered. Since then they have corresponded twice more.)

The teaching language is English, but the majority of the children speak Xhosa and when they come to grade 8, most of them do not speak so good English. They study Xhosa as a compulsory language and an additional language has been Afrikaans, but now it was the last year when they had that, because the primary schools had dropped it, the principal said.

A language teacher in English and Xhosa said that it is a problem for the children to express themselves in English, because they speak Xhosa most of the time. When they read and write in Xhosa, she says,

“They seem to disconnect what they speak from what they write. We have not so many books in Xhosa. We do have Xhosa language textbooks, but the reading material is not much. ... ”

Another teacher was concerned about their language. He said that their language is not good when they write essays in history. He thought that their “cell phone language” when they mix English and Xhosa would make it still worse.

The teacher librarian said:

“whenever anyone asks what I should want, I always say Xhosa books, because we don’t have many of those. I believe the reading should actually be in their home language and from that they could develop another language and then move on. They have textbooks with their Xhosa teacher, but not other textbooks.”

I noticed that in the library there were mostly picture books and other books for young children in Xhosa. The boy in grade 9 I cited above says:

“I would like to have more books in Xhosa, I have read these books so many times. I know them by heart. Grade 8 like to read Xhosa books. There are storybooks, good night storybooks, daytime storybooks. They would like to have some other books. Grade 9, 10 11 need higher books.”

The school library was a rather big room on the third floor, well equipped with shelves along the walls with encyclopaedias, fiction, and non-fiction, magazines and a lot of posters and other material, e.g. on HIV/AIDS. The room was furnished with tables and chairs for about one class to sit. The teacher librarian had decorated the library with information material hanging from lines drawn between shelves. She was good at calligraphy and had made all the signs. The principal said (talking about reading promotion):

“First and most of all we have the library. It is a very user-friendly library and it’s probably the best library of all the schools in Knysna. It’s open and it’s free and we do encourage it as much as possible. And in the classes the teachers have projects etc. where the learners should do some research.”

The teachers used the school library mostly for assignments and projects for the learners and they didn’t go there themselves so often. One teacher said that she brought her own books to the library sometimes when she wanted the learners to get information from books that were not in the library. Then the teacher librarian helped her with guiding the learners. The principal had noted that the teacher librarian often helped the other teachers when they were supposed to devise projects for the learners and draw up work sheets. When I asked how she could have the time to do that, the principal admitted that she ought to have more time. “The

only restriction is time”, he said. When I asked who decides about time, he said that it was himself and the teacher librarian.

The library was open every day one hour at lunch break when the teacher librarian was there together with learner library helpers. There were two different library helpers every day, ten in all. The teacher librarian got one hour allocated each day as compensation for working in the lunch hour. She got no other time and her biggest wish was to get more time for the library, she said. Several times she had said: “this year I will have no library, because I have so much teaching, all the grades 8 and 9. Everybody has so much to do.” She thought it was difficult to get more time. But she got “a lot of verbal support and moral support”. She had library lessons in grade 8, when the learners were trained to use encyclopaedia and atlas. I could observe a lesson, where the learners got questions prepared by the teacher librarian. It was questions where they needed information from the two different books and they also needed to think about the answers – they were not easily accessed, only to copy. They should also write reference facts properly.

The teacher librarian would have liked to have more classes in the library. It was obvious that she really liked the library job. Some of the other teachers came to help now and then after school if she called them, she told me. But there was no functioning library committee. The library helpers were a great help and according to the reading boy above:

“We plan new posters and some other teachers help sometimes. ... we are ten of us, the library helpers, and we function all things together, we make decisions. And we can call a meeting. It’s good. We can communicate. We can talk about an issue, if it’s something I don’t like about the library. When we want help we can support each other. The old library helpers like to forget, now the new ones can help the old ones.”

Another of the library helpers, a girl in grade 8 that I interviewed, felt that she got help from the teacher librarian every time she needed, but she would like the library to be open more often. But she, like many of the other learners, could not stay after school, because the school buses don’t wait. Some of the learners who lived near to the school would have liked the library to be open every afternoon after school. Now it was open half an hour on Wednesdays after school. One of the most important activities in the library was to get material for project work, often photocopies from reference books that you could not borrow. When I was there, many learners also were sitting in the library reading magazines or looking in encyclopaedias during lunch break. Since it happened to be the South African Library Week when I was there, the teacher librarian had arranged special activities in the library, like a quiz and a

public speech event. Then the library was full and you could see that the space was too small for this big school. One teacher said: “We should need a bigger library.”

If the learners didn't get time to go to the school library, they have to find the resources somewhere else. According to the OBE they are supposed to learn to find information. Many learners go to other libraries in leisure hours. There is a small public library in one of the locations where they live and a church-driven activity centre/library in another location that was mostly for Xhosa-speaking, according to the principal. There was also the town library in Knysna. Sometimes there was a problem that the younger kids went into town to go to the library, not telling their parents or guardians. The teacher librarian told me that some of the kids had real problems being away from home too long, sometimes getting into trouble.

Both learners and teachers used the public town library in Knysna. Public librarians from the library sometimes came to the school and made a book display for the teachers. The teacher librarian could borrow block loans from the public library to the school library.

The provincial educational library service in Cape Town was used by some of the teachers – probably mostly for ordering videos. But one teacher said it was too much trouble to order or to send things back in time and some teachers did not know how useful the service was. When I told them that a new media centre was planned to open soon in the nearby city George, some of them said they might want to try that. The teacher librarian would be glad if they would contact her. It was some time since she talked to them about networking in some way with other schools. She would like that, she said.

The High School had two computer rooms with frequent activity. The school was involved in an ICT development project and had received a fairly big amount of computers. The learners were working mostly with a mathematical programme and with Encarta Encyclopaedia. The teacher in charge of the computer labs, said that it was part of the project that they also should involve the community and teach people from there.

She had no cooperation with the teacher librarian in connection with the computers. She was also teaching biology and she said that she gave the learners assignments where they had to use the library. About media in the library she said:

“I’m sure there are many computer books, that we could have, a wonderful computer magazine, they are all very expensive. That would be very nice to have that. A lot of children are very interested.”

About information literacy she said that one of the modules in the online training programme for the computers on the school net was on information literacy. She had also thought of using the literacy programme that they were going to use for the community, for the learners also, instead of computer training. It was so much to read and it also contained ethical questions. She thought that the learners were very poor readers.

This teacher was also deputy principal and in charge of the discipline in the school. She, the principal, the teacher librarian and one other teacher were the only white teachers among a staff of about 32. I noticed that this sometimes could create problems, when a boy was brought in to her. He had said something about the white teachers being prejudiced. This was of course a very serious thing, especially in South Africa, and I had to wait with my interview until they had dealt with this problem and contacted the boy’s guardian.

### **Attitudes to library use**

Learners of The High School used the library to get information for school projects and assignments. They looked in encyclopaedias and other books and made photocopies. Sometimes the library was full of learners, reading. They read magazines and did homework. Several of my interviewees said that they got good help from the library and the teacher librarian. Some of them would have liked more books in Xhosa. They thought that the library should be open more. One learner complained of the noise in the library and the space when it was crowded.

The teacher librarian had noticed that the learners came more often to the library with the new way of teaching. She had not been to courses on OBE, but she saw that the learners now were asked to find information. She thought that the library should be more open, she needed more cooperation with the other teachers and would have liked to get the library more integrated into the teaching.

The principal said that he thought that the library should be integrated into teaching: “that’s probably its prime function”. But he had not allocated time or training for the teachers how to integrate the library. He had experience from the math department of giving the learners

projects where they should find information; he mentioned that as an answer to the question if the library had helped him.

One teacher should like the library to promote reading through providing more of what the learners like to read. He also thought that they should upgrade the books with new. The library should be open in the afternoons too and maybe there should be a full time librarian. “It’s nicer when she’s there. There is a lot to learn. She can assist you”, he said, referring to the teacher librarian. And the other teachers said the same thing about getting help from the teacher librarian.

To share with other schools might be an opportunity to save money and get a more equipped library, was a suggestion. The expressed opinion of some teachers and learners was also that computers with Internet would be good to have in the library.

Another teacher said that “the library enhances the teaching. Sometimes we need more information and we get help with that.” One teacher did not use the library much himself, but could not imagine a school without a library. It is good for learners who want to read during the break. “We must give them a lot of options”, he said.

## **A conference on e-education**

By a lucky coincidence a big conference for teacher librarians, library facilitators and other interested parties from different parts of South Africa was held in the last days of my visit to South Africa. My contact person helped me to be able to participate in the conference together with the library facilitators and others, who went there from Gauteng Provincial Educational Department. The conference was held in Bloemfontein, Free State, neighbour province to Gauteng, and was hosted by Free State Department of Education. I was asked to deliver a short paper about Swedish school libraries.

The name of the conference was “Information Empowers: the use of multi-media resources to develop critical thinking and lifelong learning skills in the 21<sup>st</sup> century”. A foundation for the conference was the *White Paper on e-education*. (Department of Education, 2004) This document is a policy for ICT implementation in South African schools. Here e-education is defined in many words, I cite two examples from the presentation:

“2.3 e-Education is more than developing computer literacy and the skills necessary to operate various types of information and communication technology. It is the ability to:

- apply ICT skills to access, analyse, evaluate, integrate, present and communicate information;
- create knowledge and new information by adapting, applying, designing, inventing and authoring information;
- function in a knowledge society by using appropriate technology and mastering communication and collaboration skills.” ...

“3.5 It is “learning through the use of ICT” that most fully realises the potential of ICT and that this policy directive aims to pursue. Learning through the use of ICT is arguably one of the most powerful means of supporting learners to achieve the nationally-stated curriculum goals. In particular, the use of ICT for learning encourages:

- learner-centred learning;
- active, exploratory, inquiry-based learning;
- collaborative work among learners and teachers; and
- creativity, analytical skills, critical thinking and informed decision making.”

This seems to be the new solution to many problems and a policy that is more important than providing other learning and teaching material. It does not integrate library and information service development.

The seminars in Bloemfontein showed that a lot of hard work was going on around in South African provinces and schools. Big and small school library and information technology projects were reported. The speakers all gave the impression to struggle to get the school libraries accepted as an important role player in the development of the provision of resources for achieve the curriculum goals.

From the university education in library and information science in Cape Town a lecturer held three workshops in information literacy training and the use of Internet among other resources in school projects. The University of Cape Town had newly expanded its course for teachers to become librarians in schools. As they say on their website:

“The school libraries which do exist are being run by part-time staff paid out of school funds or by teachers in their “free” periods. The irony is that there is an increased need for such in schools as the new curriculum explicitly recognises the need for information skills training and encourages the sort of teaching approaches that require access to a wide range of learning resources. The global economy as well as the developmental needs of South Africa require school leavers to be information literate. And indeed *Curriculum 2005* lists information literacy as an essential cross-curricular outcome. ... The new

programme recognises these realities and aims at providing support and practical training for teachers faced with responsibility for their school library and for the development of information literacy within their schools. It also aims at providing training for teachers who want to qualify as professional school librarians – especially as new policies are likely to be put in place in the next few years to establish these posts. We plan to work closely with the support structures of the Western Cape Education Department to ensure that our training remains relevant and immediately useful.”  
(<http://www.uwc.ac.za/arts/libinf/ACE.htm>, retrieved 05-07-05)

According to the lecturer from The University of Cape Town, the courses they have are becoming more and more popular and the provinces send teachers there.

Later I had the opportunity of talking to the head of these courses and she pointed at the fact that teachers come to them supported by their management and do projects in their schools when they come back. That can have an impact on school library development. She thought that the most important keys are staff in the schools with capacity to manage a school library, a national policy that can support them and the principal and with an implementation plan, including funding.<sup>5</sup>

## **Concluding remarks and suggestions**

School libraries have a chance to improve the new teaching and learning in schools. My interviews with teachers and learners showed that they would like to use them more and got valuable help by them. But I think my interviews in the schools did not give so much new information as I had hoped. One reason to that can be connected to that neither my interviewees nor I had English as our first language. With the knowledge I have now, I would probably also have chosen other more detailed questions to the teachers about the curriculum, their teaching methods and their use of teaching and learning material.

Now they saw me as someone only investigating the library and maybe they felt uncomfortable and defensive if they did not use it so much. It would have been interesting to find out more about their thoughts about pedagogical questions, if they thought they were going to need more cooperation and provision of alternative resources in the future. But I got a picture of how the libraries were used, looking and asking for the criteria from my library research (Streatfield and Todd). I also got ideas of how the libraries could be more involved

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<sup>5</sup> Conversation in Oslo with Genivieve Hart, Department of Libray & Information Science, University of Western Cape, South Africa 2005-08-19

in the curriculum and support the learning and teaching more. The possibilities were there, but the priorities and the will were not strong enough in relation to the library.

If there could be more time for cooperation between the person responsible for the school library and the other staff and more time for guiding learners in the library, the school libraries could provide different media and training how to use it. Cooperation with regional library service and public libraries is essential. If the teacher librarians get further education in how to integrate ICT in the library and information service of the school, the human resources would be more capable in relation to the new technology is introduced in the schools. If cooperation is possible with NGOs involved in reading and school improvement, with the SGBs of the schools, parents and/or the surrounding community it could improve the service of the school library. Networking and support through the different sectors are vital.

But the answer to my other research question what is happening with school library policy is more difficult. The Policy Framework was not known in the schools, because it had not been officially approved. Some of its ideas had been used in the schools I visited, because in both schools there was one person that had been working with the document. In The Primary School there was a school library committee and a school library plan had been established in the schools, as recommended in the policy document. These were traces from the LPYL project, in which the teacher librarians had participated.

For many, but not so obvious reasons, the long story of “The school library policy” has not been told to the end. It depends on many different things, in addition to lack of resources to fulfil all the needs in the former disadvantaged areas and the whole South Africa. I could see some of them in my investigation:

- too little communication between the different educational levels of society
- different educational policies and strategies which often seem to be divergent
- many reforms and transformations in the educational field requiring time to understand and adjust to
- the road to transformation and even the word transformation itself, is not easy to interpret in the documents

One of the speakers at the conference in Bloemfontein discussed the concept transformation that she earlier had thought of as “a discursive and imaginary or mythical conceptual space that loosely signalled everything and anything that would replace apartheid” (Karlsson, 2005).

She quotes studies of other researchers to try to find theories about the importance of examining purposes and aims before deciding how serious we should take government's policy statements. This is also supported by Levin's theories of policymaking as I have mentioned in the theory chapter. My views coincide with these paragraphs in Dr Jenni Karlsson's speech in Bloemfontein:

- Education planners, specialists and school managers should resist the idea that ICTs are a sole solution and that school libraries are outmoded. There should not be an exclusive approach to teaching and learning support materials. Indeed, a synergy of traditional library-based resources and ICTs should be sought.
- The installation of ICTs in schools does not eliminate the need for a teacher-librarian. In fact, more than ever before, teacher-librarians need to be appointed because they have a mediating role to play to bring teacher, learner and technology together and guide the learner in effectively making meaning of, using and repackaging electronic and print-based information. A technology learning area educator and technician do not have the wide ranging information literacy and conceptual information search, retrieval and organising training that school librarians receive. Their particular expertise in relation to information literacy and use needs to be better understood among senior education managers. (Karlsson, 2005)

In the conference in Bloemfontein the different levels were present. The national level was represented by the National Department of Education and a report of the work on a National Literacy Strategy was said to be linked to a development of a National School Library Policy Framework among other things. Again a new policy will be introduced and let's hope that this policy will have a better chance to be implemented than the National Policy Framework for School Library Standards has had. Well-prepared policies are important for changing attitudes and education in the long term.

But this cannot come without a provincial plan for implementation of the policy. The different levels have to communicate with each other and the policies and strategies must come down to the local and school level. They cannot, as many such papers do, stay in the principals' offices and not be known and recognized by the governing bodies and staff. Sometimes I have understood that policies also can be seen as threats by staffs, which already are overloaded with learning new things. The provinces should enhance their information and make their policies and also their services more known and used. A better contact between all the different parties is needed. It is important to work with what you have!

Within the provinces, districts and communities there must be networking activities to give opportunities for teachers, library and information staff from provincial, public and local level

to meet and best practices to be spread. The strong dynamic individuals who are present in the different institutions will continue their struggles and they should be supported and rewarded.

If The Primary School could get some help with organising the library from the provincial department there could be a reference library in combination with classroom boxes. There should be an integration of ICT and the reference library to give the learners a choice and an option to use different media. Then the teacher librarian could make the library more useful and maybe it would be possible to make an agreement with some other schools and share resources. But this, I think, would be difficult to achieve without help from the library facilitator or the educational department in some way. It would be possible to get help through the district library facilitator.

Library students or other suitable unemployed graduates or maybe under-graduates could be used in schools for many purposes. There is a great need for more adults in the schools and there is unemployment. There are short courses for them so that they might later be able to take full responsibility for a school library. This is a way that should be tested.

This could also be a way for The High School. If a person could work full time in collaboration with the teacher librarian the library could to a much greater extent be of support and use for the learners. Here the integration of ICT is still more important, as the school is the last educational stop for many of the learners and they should have the option of learning to use many different media and get training, both in English and – which is very important - in their mother tongue. The language question is something that I think must get much more attention in the schools. The learners must get access to learning material and reading in their own languages to a much greater extent.

At the same time as backing library staff, training courses and workshops in

- information literacy,
- use of literature, stories, reading and storytelling in teaching
- integrating library and information in education

should be available continuously by the provincial or local authorities (if possible in cooperation with the universities that offer library and information education), preferably in schools, school community centres or public libraries present in every community. The courses should include principals, politicians, parents and adult learners. Then the service could be more linked to realities in the community and participation from community

members and a joint use of resources might be easier. It could give opportunities to promote the love of reading and a try to merge the “western” culture of reading with the “African” oral culture and storytelling, as my South African colleague and friend puts it in my interview with her. The storytelling tradition is not something natural for the youth of today, but is taken up by artists and authors, who try to revive the tradition. School libraries can support the oral expressions by talking books, reading and storytelling.

Through my study I have learnt about South African school library research, how policies are made and that national and regional policies are important for development. But they are not easy to implement, they can be contradictory and sometimes even lead to inequality. They should be easy to interpret and implement. Policies take time to make, get accepted and implemented. They must be followed by implementation plans, involving all levels in society and by funding.

I have also learnt that although people in South Africa are aware of the past inequalities, like all of us they drag old structures, living conditions and habits – even if they were forced upon them - along with them into the new society. Sometimes other old structures are abandoned as bad, when it might have been better to keep them and only make small changes to suit the democratic society. There is still imbalance in research in South Africa, not surprisingly – the university world is not changing fast. The authors in my research references are in many cases not black researchers, though I have not thought about that in searching information.

As a foreigner I think I have not fully understood the importance of the South African history. I have not had enough time and knowledge to evaluate all my information in relation to historical, racial and class questions, which could have been important in the subject of libraries as traditionally middle class, white institutions. Other important factors like HIV/AIDS should have been taken into consideration. HIV/AIDS has probably had a blocking effect on many development questions, inclusive the provision of qualified staff in schools.

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## Appendix

### i) Terminology

Curriculum 2005	The new curriculum, introduced in South Africa 1998
Foundation phase	Grade R-3
Grade R	Reception year, 6 years old
IASL	International Association of School Libraries
IFLA	The International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions
Intermediate phase	Grade 4-7
Learner	Pupil, student – the most common word in South African educational texts
LIASA	Library and Information Association of South Africa
LIS	Library and Information Sector
LPYL	Library Practice for Young Learners
OBE	Outcomes Based Education
Revised National Curriculum Statement	Revision of Curriculum 2005 in 2004 to make it easier to implement and understand

### ii) Number of interviewees

In **the primary school** I interviewed six learners, four teachers (the old and the new teacher librarian included) and the principal.

Learners: Two girls from grade 6 and one girl from grade 7, three boys from grade 7

Teachers:

M., female, the former teacher librarian, teacher in grade 3, head of department for the foundation phase.

K., male, the new teacher librarian, teacher in grade 5 and also social studies in grade 6 and science in grade 7.

S., male, grade 7 and also life orientation and arts and culture in grade 5 and English and mathematics in grade 7.

T., female, grade 5 and also taught Zulu and English in grade 4. They were two females and two males.

In **the high school** I interviewed six learners (five girls, one boy), five teachers and the principal.

Learners: Two girls grade 8, two grade 11, one grade 12, one boy grade 9

Teachers:

N., male, history in grade 12, Business economics in grade 10, head of department for social sciences, responsible for acquisition of material and a member of several committees.

W., female, teacher librarian, teacher in grade 12 in Afrikaans and English and English, life orientation and library lessons in grade 8.

N., female, Xhosa grade 8, life orientation grade 9, English grade 12.

Z., male, teacher in grade 8, teaches maths and science in grade 8, 10 and 11.

S., female, deputy principal,

M., male, principal, also teacher in mathematics in grade 11 and 12

### **Interviews in the provincial educational departments:**

Gauteng:

Interview with one officer, responsible for school libraries

Shorter interviews with the head of the Library and Information branch of the department

Western Cape

Phone talk to the head of the Educational Library and Information Service

Phone talk to the head of a media resource centre

### **iii) One selected interview**

From my interview with a school library coordinator, Johannesburg 2005-03-07 8.15

#### **I: Could you please tell me a little about yourself and your work?**

I'm the school library coordinator. I coordinate all the different projects and activities to do with development and uses of school libraries. It's not a very easy job because there is no overarching policy and we have not got a budget. What we do is to motivate and support the schools in any way that we can, to get the libraries going and to use them and to emphasize the importance of Information Literacy. To do this we have had different activities. We have 12 districts and each district except one has a library facilitator. They are the ones that have the closest contact with the school, know what is going on in the schools. They go to visit the schools and encourage them and support them and that type of things. The largest is Johannesburg south in Soweto, it has over 200 schools. ... The smallest district has about 40. You can see that it is not possible for one person to visit all the schools. I tell them that they should spend the energy and time and attention on those schools that are trying to do something. The schools have a choice. We cannot force them to have a library. They can't spend their precious time on a school like that. ...

It seems like a small thing, but I think it is making an impact: I think it is a valuable project that we do, the school library awards in Gauteng. This is the second year that we have had it, the first year, that we really have it in a formal way. Of the 2000 schools we have had 35 or 36 entries. That doesn't sound like a lot, but it's a start. ... There are some very good entries. Some of the schools, even the poor schools are really trying to do something. ... They have to do a report on which type of library they have; do they have a central library, where is it at, do

they have classroom collection, what do they do to provide library service, do they do something to supply resources for their learners, do they make use of the public library, of the Education library, the courier service and so on. We made it very broad.

...

Educational Library is in Pretoria. That's our biggest unit. The library has a courier service to most of the districts. The schools don't have to go to Pretoria to collect their resources, they can go to the district office. The teachers can borrow 50 learners' books at a time. It is very well used that service. They can't really say that there is no access to resources.

...

For the longest part of my career time I was involved in evaluation of resources for school libraries. That was at the white department. After the democracy I joined the Educational library and since then I have been over the school libraries, which is actually my great interest and passion. Before in the apartheid time we published six times a year a guide of suitable resources for school libraries. You know there was a reaction against the old and when the new department started it was regarded autocratic and prescriptive. So that whole unit was closed down and we did not publish anything like that any more. But some say that they should still need something like that. We gave annotations of all books and how they could be used. They say that they miss that. ... So what I am doing from that aspect of my background I try to do as much training as I can to teach the teachers what they must look for, how to buy books, how to judge what books to buy, not only to look at the outside, if it looks good.

**I: Can the teachers buy which books they want?**

Yes if they have got money they can buy whatever books they like. **I: Do they have money?** Some schools have money some don't. It depends on how much school fee the parents can afford. **I: Does it depend on that?** They get some money from the state. The poor schools get more than the wealthier schools. Every school gets money allocated from the provincial Educational government. The national government allocates money for the provinces and the provinces allocates to the schools. ... There is sort of a sliding scale of which they allocate more to the poor schools. All schools can and do charge school fees. The school fee can be from R100 a year, different in different schools. In other schools the school fee can be quite substantial. Sometimes the children can't even pay R100, but they can get exemption.

**I: You knew about the school library policy document? Have you used it in your work?**

Yes I was involved in the development. – (reluctant) We do use it to a certain extent in my job. It gives you a guideline of what a schools should be able to do. But because it has no official standing, any of it cannot be enforced. I think it is a very good document. But I do think... We try to be as flexible as possible and to be realistic and realize that all schools can't immediately have libraries. The schools themselves feel that..., some of them, some of the comments that we have, that it perpetuates inequalities – that it doesn't sort of give much impetus to a school to go in the direction of a central library.

**I: What do you think has happened to this document since you first worked with it?**

I know what has happened! (laughs) The problem is that the unit that was responsible for school libraries at the National Department of Education has been closed down. ... The document has been going through a few versions. I think, I might be wrong, that the reason why the national department is so reluctant to use it because it has cost implications.

**I: What department should be responsible?**

The Educational Department should be responsible. We ourselves here made policy documents in Gauteng based on this document - I think in 2000, it might have been a little bit later. We try to get this through our department. Because it was a national document it has not

yet been accepted. It seems to have changed now, because our division manager says that we should have a policy even if the national doesn't have. It looks like it is going to be better. It looks that it might have changed. You always have to go through this bureaucracy.

There is one province that has managed to get a policy in spite of that there is no national ... /There is/ is a very dynamic lady. ... She is really an example to us. Her province has really achieved a lot. She has succeeded to achieve more than any other province.

As I said, when things changed and they began to be suspicious of what you had done in the past, you have to start all over again with your lobbying and your arguments

**I: What kind of library is most common in the schools now?**

The most common I think in primary schools is classroom collections. But the schools would very much try to get a centralized library. And some of the schools I hear are trying to do something in a classroom and try to get a centralized library.

**I: Why do you think a centralized library is important? What role do you think it could play?**

Now we've got this Outcomes Based Education. This is from the practical point of view. The learners are assessed on the work that they have to do by themselves. They need to have access to resources; of course they do need to have access to resources. And it's impractical that public libraries should provide those resources, because their budgets have also been cut severely (emphasized). They have very very small budgets. And often it's difficult to use the public libraries - they are often not located near the schools or where they live. It is difficult to come to the library. The learners will have to pay taxi fee that they don't have to go to the public library, if they have to walk to the library it can sometimes be dangerous and it's also a question of time. In my opinion it's very important that they should have access to the resources in their own school or at least they should have resources close to where they are. But most primary schools still have classroom collections. Some have started with centralized collections. The previous white schools have centralized libraries. **I: Because they have better economy?** Yes and they also had a post for a teacher librarian, but that doesn't exist any more. That is most secondary schools. They still have the room and the books, but it is closed. ... We have heard of quite a few schools that had closed their library that have opened it again. All the secondary schools in the old days had library room, black, white or whatever, but the black schools had no library post, which is not an ideal situation. Many of the rooms have been changed into staff rooms or storerooms or whatever. They have to start again. It is also an encouraging dream for some of them to revitalize their library.

**I: Which are the important factors for getting school libraries?**

I think the policy is extremely important. Because the principal wants to have something in black and in white. (laughs) It does not have to be national. Some provinces have much bigger problem than ours, so it should be a national policy. Many rural schools are very remote. Not so much in our province as e.g. in Limpopo. And KwaZulu Natal has got many many rural schools with a complicated situation.

**I: Do you think the situation in /the province with their own policy/ is because of one person? "Fiery soul", as we say in Swedish?**

(Laughs) I think so! A very dynamic lady! She also had more support from her management.

**I: Aren't there other factors?** Yes, it is all linked. If there is a policy then you can have a budget for the library, which is important. If you can't have a full time librarian, the policy should state that there should be a post for the library, with fewer teaching periods, someone

should actually almost be forced to work in the library with the library work. Information skills is very much emphasized in each subject. I am not sure that someone takes full responsibility for it. I don't think it comes to its right. It is at some extent neglected. So there should also be a provision for a formal education in information skills.

...

We have a national network, provincial heads of school library service have a network. They have a meeting every year, but they have contact all year.

...

Some of the facilitators have started networks – one has started so-called cluster groups of school librarians. She initiated it and has an eye on it. I asked her to talk to all the facilitators and try to inspire the others. It is working very well and the teachers are very enthusiastic about it. What came out of that is also that the more experienced are helping those with less experience. And some others have also started that. One did not succeed so well to get contact between them. The wealthiest schools are starting to realize how fortunate they are. Some of them do other things. One of them he got a combi and loaded a lot of school librarians and took them to other libraries and to the Education Library. It is good that we give them attention. We take them to conferences – you know about this in Bloemfontein and to the IASL conference we took 60 teacher librarians. That inspired them.

**I: Do you have some hopes for school libraries in the future?**

I do have hope for the school libraries. ... Up till now, every time we have been lobbying about school libraries, we have been told that there are schools that don't have toilets. I say that they should have toilets **and** libraries! (Laughs) Some say that the Internet will solve all problems and that we will not need libraries any more. But I think it is slowly changing and that there will come some realism about that soon.

**I: Are you involved in ICT in any way?**

We have this project Gauteng Online. They are placing 50 computers to every school. **I: Have they decided how to teach teachers and learners?** It's seems to me that the teaching is most about how to use computers, not how to use information, information literacy. They have not realized that this must be a part of it.

And I think it needs so much technical support. Sometimes they have got a computer lab, but it is not online. You see not even I have got an e-mail, because our department has not been able to fix it.

...

**I: What negative factors do you think there are for the future, if we look beyond economics?**

Yes, the fact that we have not yet got a reading culture in the country. And many did not have libraries in their education so they don't think libraries are really necessary. Some think that Internet is going to solve all problems and they don't need libraries.

...

**I: Is there anything else you would like to say?**

The children need a place where they can do their homework. At home it is difficult - they have too little space. A cultural thing is that it is very rude to lock myself in a room not to give attention to people in the house, so they cannot get a calm place to study at home. They need a quiet place away from home. There have been some attempts to get community school libraries. We have just got a report and not seen what it says yet, I should get the report so you could see. I have heard that in some places this has been good. It is very small scale. (Unfortunately I never got that report – it would have been interesting to read.)

#### iv) Interview guide for teachers

<b>Introduction:</b> Thank you for taking time to talk to me. This interview is a part of my work with a master thesis on school libraries. I am a school librarian myself and have studied part time for some semesters on an international course in Sweden called Communication for Development. I hope you will let me use this interview in my thesis. I will not mention your name or other identification.	
<b>1. Personal background</b>	Can you please tell me a little about yourself, personal background and present work situation, what do you teach? What grade do you teach, how many, how old are the children? What languages do the children speak? Are the children good at reading and writing?
<b>2. The school library</b>	What possibilities do you or your learners have to use the school library? How often, when? Can the learners go there without the teacher? Is it open long enough? Is it easy to use? Can you use it without help? What do you do there? Resources: Do you miss any special books or other media (encyclopaedias, computers, cd-roms, Internet)? Do you cooperate in any way with the staff of the school library? Could you tell me a situation when the school library really helped? Could you mention any changes of the school library that would be good for the teaching? Is a school library essential for the education?
<b>3. Reading, information literacy</b>	Are any reading promotion projects going on in the school? What kind, how? Do you in any way teach about “information literacy” – how to find information and to use it?
<b>4. Learning material</b>	What kind of learning/teaching material is the most common? Who decides what material should be used? From where can you access it?

<b>Media use</b>	How much do you use media like:	Often	Sometimes	Never
	books (not school text books)			
	Newspapers			
	Magazines			
	oral stories (talking books)			
	CDs/CD-roms & other audiovisual media What?			
	computers, software			
<b>Resource centre?</b>	Is there any pedagogical resource centre from where you can get help? Do you use any public library?			
<b>5. Learner participation</b>	Do you encourage learners to contribute with their own material from home? Are there any school committees where learners participate? Does the school have a library committee? Who participate? Can the learners in any way influence the teaching and planning?			
<b>6. Pedagogy OBE</b>	Do you work together in teams with other teachers? Has the new curriculum and Outcomes Based Education had influence in the school? Do you think it is useful? Have you heard of <i>Teacher's Guide for the Development of Learning Programmes</i> ? Is there anything else you would like to add? <b>Thank you for participating!</b>			