

**MAKING VISIBLE LITERACY AS SOCIAL PRACTICE IN  
EARLY CHILDHOOD CENTRES**

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## ABSTRACT

This study problematises early childhood teachers' dominant discourses of literacy as social practice through a Foucauldian genealogical approach to discourse analysis. Consequently, the study is situated at the intersection of three main research areas: understandings of early childhood teachers' discourses of literacy as social practice, understandings of how these discourses inform early literacy practice and understandings of what is affected by the construction of literacy in particular ways.

The study drew on two complementary theoretical frameworks: New Literacy Studies and Foucauldian discourse theory. The concepts of literacy events and literacy practices made visible how meanings, intentions and actions around an event were constructed and the kinds of social and cultural models that the early childhood teachers drew on in different social situations at the early childhood centres. Foucault's theory of discourse was used to make salient the influence of these interpretative frames of references on the understandings and practice of literacy. Concepts of power/knowledge and subjectivity served as a theoretical lens to make sense of how constructing literacy in particular ways worked to produce normalising regimes for the construction and regulation of both the early childhood teacher and children.

The study was situated within a qualitative research approach and drew on post-structural conceptions of literacy as social practice. A purposive sample of two early childhood teachers, teaching children between the ages of 3-4 years of age in two early childhood centres was used. Using ethnographic data generation techniques such as observation and interviews and Foucault's genealogical tools of discourse, power/knowledge and subjectivity, enabled 'new' ways of thinking about why certain literacy practices become normalised, whilst others are marginalised or silenced.

From the analysis of the early childhood teachers' utterances in the semi-structured interviews, four 'definitional' discourses that related to literacy as social practice were identified. The genealogical methods employed reduced the data to find that early childhood teachers produced literacy as social practice in how they constructed literacy, children, themselves as literacy teachers and parental involvement in literacy development. The four 'definitional' discourses included *literacy as skill*, *the good*

*teacher, the becoming child and the good parent.* A significant insight into the study showed how the discourse of literacy as skill converged and intersected to produce the subjectivity of the *good teacher, the becoming child and the good parent.*

The discourses that informed literacy as social practice gave direction to what and how the teachers did what they did in their classrooms. By means of particular temporal and spatial arrangements, children's behaviours, bodies and minds were highly regulated and subjected to intensive training to bring the *becoming child* into effect. Additionally, children were also regulated by the universal pre-determined discourse of child development discourse and school readiness as their performances at different times and in different spaces enabled assessment of children and their learning against these milestones.

The teachers at the two centres used different literacy pedagogical practices that were either teacher-directed or child-initiated. These practices were highly ritualised and formed part of the daily routines and transitions in both the early childhood classrooms. Classroom observations revealed that child-initiated and teacher-directed play were highly panoptic spaces that were closely aligned to curriculum content of child development and school readiness. With child development and school readiness discourse as a benchmark for the development of *the becoming child*, assessment and observation became normalising pedagogic practices during child-initiated and teacher-directed play.

A significant insight into the study showed how in constructing the child as *becoming*, children's engagement and participation were relegated to the learning of specific autonomous skills required to become school ready. The constructions of *the becoming child*, silenced children's agency and participation in terms of their own meaning-making processes and capacity to construct their own learning in teacher-created learning spaces. This conceptualisation of literacy and children is problematic as these constructions position children as deficit and their capacities and cultural capital are silenced. However, the study did reveal that whilst children were subjected to intense regulation and normalisation during different classroom literacy practices at different times and in different spaces, they began to regulate themselves, their peers and

teachers, thereby showing a form of individual agency and autonomy.

This study opens up spaces to deepen understandings into literacy as social practice in early childhood centres by drawing the theoretical, the methodological and the empirical study together. Theoretically, it provides insights into how making use of concepts drawn from New Literacy Studies and Foucault's theory of discourse, power/knowledge, disciplinary techniques of power and subjectivity enables 'new' understandings of how discourse, power/knowledge intersect to construct children, teaching and learning in different ways within the South African context. In addition, the findings of the study suggest that combining ethnographic tools of semi-structured interviews and observations that focus on everyday classroom literacy practices with post structural theoretical tools provides a 'new' way of thinking historically and geographically about how discourse, power and knowledge intersect to construct the subjectivity of the early literate child. A further insight of this study suggests that current policy debates and reform initiatives should extend discussions and debates from what is, can and should be learnt in early literacy classrooms to include discussions around how children learn *in* as well as what they learn *about* school through different literacy pedagogical practices.

### **Keywords**

*Literacy, social practice, discourse, power/knowledge, subjectivity, genealogy, child development, school readiness*

## **DEDICATION**

This thesis is dedicated to my late parents, Collin and Christine Martin. Although you are no longer physically with me, I feel your presence and spirit guiding me through all the difficulties and harsh realities of life. Thank you for your love, wisdom, support and your never-ending belief in me. I am eternally grateful for the strong values and work ethic that you have instilled within me, which kept me going through this long and demanding research journey.

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## STATEMENT OF ORIGINAL AUTHORSHIP

### DECLARATION

I, Colwyn Deborah Martin declare that this thesis submitted in fulfilment of the degree:

#### **Philosophiae Doctor**

- I. This is my original work, except where otherwise indicated.
- II. I also certify that this thesis has not been previously submitted at this or any other faculty or institution.
- III. This thesis does not contain other persons' writing, unless specifically acknowledged as being sourced from other researchers. Where other written sources have been quoted then:
  - a) their words have been re-written but the general information attributed to them has been referenced; and
  - b) where the exact words have been used, their writings has been placed inside quotation marks and referenced.
- IV. The data and pictures that are contained within this thesis have been used with permission obtained from the participants in the study.

I hereby cede copyright of the thesis in favour of the University of the Free State.



**Colwyn Deborah Martin**



**Professor Hasina Ebrahim**

## **PUBLICATIONS IN PEER REVIEWED JOURNALS**

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## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

- CNE Christian National Education
- ECC Early Childhood Centre
- ECD Early Childhood Development
- ECE Early Childhood Education
- DoBE Department of Basic Education
- DoH Department of Health

DoSD	Department of Social Development
NCF	National Curriculum Framework
NELDS	National Early Learning Standards
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organisations

# Chapter 1

## Setting the scene to make visible literacy as social practice in early childhood centres

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### 1.1 Introduction

*There can be no keener revelation of a society's soul than the way in which it treats its children* (Nelson Mandela, 1995:1).

The poignant words of Nelson Mandela cited above touches the very essence of what it means to be part of a humane society that gives priority to young children, their rights and needs. There is no keener evaluation of how a society 'treats its children' than through the process of education. I believe that Mandela's vision for young children positions education at the centre of this moral and political endeavour where all "government, institutions...organised sectors of civil society and individuals give direction and impetus" to act "for children, about children and with children" (Mandela, 1995:1; Ebrahim, 2013: 455).

Consequently, this thesis is informed by my interpretations on the 'soul' of South African society. Influenced by the vision of Mandela in my own practice and as an advocate for social justice, equity and transformation, I attempted to understand the process of redress that placed children at the centre of the human project for societal renewal and transformation. Mandela called for "actions and policies, and the institutions we create...[to] be eloquent with care, respect and love" (Mandela, 1995:1). In this relationship, the manner in which adults within various institutions respond to children is fundamental. It is a relationship in which trust, love, respect and care are crucial if children are to develop and grow.

Mandela's moral and ethical vision for children, their rights and needs as fundamental to the human project of society have implications for early childhood education in contemporary South Africa. The ways in which a society views educational reform, the kinds of policies that are put into place for children and early childhood services, the actions of all those who act on behalf of children and for

children strongly influence young children's experiences of education. Whilst the South Africa government has put into place a number of policies, frameworks and interventions, which reveals government's commitment to enhancing social justice and equitable early childhood service provisioning for young children, the early childhood sector still faces many challenges.

In order to insert myself into the "direction and impetus" for change and on reflection on the soul of a society that gives priority to children, I pondered over actions I could take that might contribute to early childhood education "for children, about children and with children" (Mandela, 1995:1; Ebrahim, 2013: 455). This PhD study with its aspiration towards the construction of knowledge in a "practical and exemplary way" focuses on literacy in early childhood centres to understand the experiences of children and so understand how South Africa treats its children (Mandela, 1995:1). In so doing, it makes a modest contribution to social justice and transformation of children's lives from the vantage point of making visible literacy as social practice in early childhood centres for 3-4 year old children. In what follows, I invite the reader to accompany me on the complex journey I traversed to make sense of how literacy as social practice was conceptualised, the influence of these conceptualisations on literacy practices and the effects of this on teachers, children, teaching and learning.

## **1.2 My Journey into the field of Early Childhood Education**

Research requires "thought about the intersection of biography, history and social structure" (Popkewitz, 1988:379). My history, my subjectivity and the context in which I practice my work are integral to this study; right from the formulation of the research topic, through to theorisations about literacy as social practice and critical engagement with the empirical aspects of literacy as social practice. With this in mind, I believe that it is important for the reader to connect with the history of my work experiences, as these experiences are foundational for why and how I came to conceptualise this study.

This research journey emerged as a result of my experiences as a Foundation Phase teacher and more recently, my work as a teacher educator in a higher education institution. I practised as a Foundation Phase teacher having taught children between the ages of 6 and 9. I must admit I found great satisfaction and joy in teaching young children, even though I quite often felt inhibited by school structures and prescriptive curriculum policies. The school bell, which timetabled

specialised lessons and regulation of what and how I did my work, was a hindrance to the kinds of learning programmes that I wanted to develop for children in my class. Whilst, I was aware of the regulatory frameworks within the institutional context that were used to govern what I did and how I did what I did, I was too afraid to challenge the status quo.

I was subjected to continuous surveillance, which worked to govern my work within the regulatory frameworks of the institution and curriculum policy. Consequently, the ways in which I constructed curriculum, teaching, learning and children were based on imperatives within policy. This had a direct impact on my classroom practices. My classroom practices comprised of strategies like direct instruction, group work, chanting, recitation, getting children to sit still, pay attention, observation and assessment that targeted children's bodies and minds to bring the schooled literate subject into effect (Luke, 1992; Walkerdine, 2002). These practices became regimes of normalisation that were used for diagramming, classifying and categorising the literate subject based on the extent to which they could achieve curriculum outcomes (Luke, 1992; Foucault, 1977).

Upon reflection, I realised that my pedagogic practices were based on regimes of truth that worked to construct children, learning and teaching in particular ways. "Regimes of truth" are the rules that govern what is said and how it is said Foucault (1980: 190). They override other possibilities through a set of discursive rules that govern what can be said, done and thought (Foucault, 1980). These dominant ways of thinking and being work to produce particular ways of speaking and being as an early childhood teacher, which was considered relevant to education at that moment in time. For example, my educational regime of truth was based on "behaviouristic characterisations of the schooled child as a skilled and reinforceable subject" (Luke, 1992: 116). In addition, I had particular rules for what constituted literacy and these governed what I said about literacy and how I spoke about literacy. For me, literacy was about reading, writing, listening and speaking. These conceptualisations of literacy were based on the assumption that these literacy skills could be applied in any context regardless of whom children were, the kinds of cultural capital they bring into the classroom and their capacity for individual agency. Consequently, I was able to rank and classify children in binary ways based on something that they either had or did not. These regimes of truth had their roots within the ideology of

Christian National Education (CNE) and fundamental pedagogics. CNE was essentially an expression of Christian, Afrikaner Nationalism (National Education Policy Investigation, 1992). CNE had its connected theory of pedagogical practice known as Fundamental Pedagogics. Fundamental Pedagogics saw the child as ignorant and undisciplined and in need of guidance from the teacher (Hoadley, 2011).

These regimes of truth about children, teaching and learning had been acquired during my own education and teacher training. My earliest experiences of schooling in a Catholic institution comprised of rote learning, unquestioning obedience, strict discipline, and respect for elders. My teacher training extended this bureaucratic, cognitive style that comprised of 'truths' about what constituted a schooled subject, the skills and competencies needed to be legitimated as a schooled subject and the visible signs that could be taken as evidence that these skills and competencies had been achieved.

These regimes of truth governed what was said and how it was said and worked to regulate my practice and constitute subjectivities (Foucault, 1980). This dominant discourse not only defined me as a teacher but also defined my conceptualisation of children, how they learn, the status of knowledge, aims of the teaching and learning process, and my interaction with children. They provided an overarching concept of social experience, which was part of the way that I had conceived my subjectivity as a Foundation Phase teacher. As such, my classroom pedagogic practices and the organisation of classroom activities worked to produce the docile, schooled literate subject.

When I first started working in a higher education context, I found that nothing much had changed. I was expected to train pre-service teachers to teach to policy imperatives. However, during my engagements with students, it became obvious that our training programmes were not speaking to the diverse contexts that students were teaching in. Students often spoke about the struggles they experienced during their teaching practice sessions. There was talk of the mismatch between school and home literacy practices and the lack of parental support in children's learning. Some students spoke of how children did not seem to 'get' the intentions of the activities that had been planned for the day. Many students spoke about how children struggled to engage with activities because they didn't understand the

language. From these discussions, I realised that my teacher training practices were not being responsive to the multiple contexts in which young children were experiencing literacy. I asked myself: *Why do some school literacies empower some children while simultaneously disempower others? What makes some literacies more powerful than others and what are the effects of these powerful literacies on different children?* These questions and my engagement with students made me think about the kinds of literacies that were privileged in school and how these create success or failure for different kinds of children.

I started reading the work of Heath (1983) and Street (1984), who helped me understand the language variations that occur across different groups of people as they negotiate their everyday lives. I realised that I needed to make students aware of the differences in the way that literacy is used, the different ways in which literacy is supported in the home, the cultural variations in the demonstrations of literacy, attitudes to literacy, differences in the roles that family members play in literacy learning and the value placed on literacy learning in different contexts (Heath, 1983; Street, 1984).

During the course of reading for my PhD, I began reading the work of Michel Foucault in *Discipline and Punish* (1997). I was totally captivated by the ideas of how disciplinary practices operate to construct the subject. As a literacy teacher educator, I was specifically interested in how early childhood teachers construct literacy, how these constructions impact on pedagogic practices and the effects of this on children, teaching and learning. Thus, I turned to Foucault's work in *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (1972) and *Politics and the Study of Discourse* (1991a). These works helped me understand how discourse intersects with power/knowledge to produce the literate child and how children themselves become regulated. Foucault's concepts of discourse, power/knowledge, disciplinary techniques of power and subjectivity were key constructs used in this study to make visible literacy as social practice in early childhood centres.

These personal and professional experiences provided significant impetus for this research journey into the field of literacy as social practice in early childhood contexts. In the section that follows, I provide a historical trajectory of early childhood education from the apartheid era through to contemporary South Africa. Thereafter, I problematise early literacy education, which sets the stage for the rationale and

research questions that guided my study. The theoretical framework and research design are then explicated on. Finally, the chapter provides a brief overview of the structure of the thesis.

### **1.3 A historical analysis of Early Childhood Education in South Africa: The struggle for social justice and equity**

Early childhood education in contemporary South Africa embodies an ideological and political struggle towards a society founded on social justice and human rights, which recognises the centrality of childhood and children as individuals and citizens (Department of Basic Education, 2001a; 2001b; Ebrahim, 2010b). Current attempts to enhance early childhood services and provisioning are based on a broader democratic struggle to address “the lack of a nurturing, educative and supportive environment for the vast majority of South Africa’s disenfranchised children” (Department of Basic Education, 2001b: 5). The historical overview that I outline below, from apartheid through to contemporary South Africa, highlights the continuous struggle for social justice and equity in early childhood education.

#### **1.3.1 Early childhood education: The apartheid years**

Children in South Africa have been historically disadvantaged and neglected by the ideologies and structures of the apartheid government (Atmore, 2013; Ebrahim, 2010b). The provision of education was racially unequal by design (Fiske & Ladd, 2006). For example, white children had access to good physical and material resources and highly qualified teachers whilst the opposite was true for schools serving the black<sup>1</sup> majority (Atmore, 2013). In 1954, Prime Minister Hendrik Verwoerd considered to be the principal architect of apartheid justified this inequity by saying, “What is the use of teaching a Bantu child mathematics when it cannot use it in practice?” (Jansen, 1990: 200). As a result, black children’s access to early childhood programmes and education services were severely limited and inferior as apartheid education was designed as an ideological apparatus to ensure that black, African children were trained to become manual labourers (Carrim, 2006).

A historical analysis of early childhood services in South Africa during the apartheid years reveals a clear separation between education and care. This separation

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<sup>1</sup> The Population Registration Act (1950) produced fixed and stable categories for racial categorisation of people. People were classified into racial groups viz. white, coloured, Indian and native (renamed ‘Bantu’ and later ‘black’).

impacted on the kinds of early childhood services available for children from different racial groups. As early as 1940, the Committee of Heads of Education Departments recommended that nursery schools be recognised as part of the national system of education (Department of Basic Education, 2001b). There was a clear distinction between nursery schools and crèches. Crèches were seen as providing custodial care whilst nursery schools served an educational function. Although welfare state subsidies existed for all racial groups, nursery schools for black children were not available. Nursery schools were seen as an extension of the home and the programmes and approaches used were influenced by the needs of white, middle class, urban families (Ebrahim, 2010b). Consequently, the policy context constructed white nursery schools as more privileged because they were better resourced with trained teachers and provided better services.

In addition, the release of the National Education Act (1967) further perpetuated inequitable access of early childhood development (ECD) services to children from different racial groups. The Act allocated responsibility for nursery education to white provincial education departments thereby advancing and assuring white children's access to ECD provision and services (Department of Basic Education, 2001b; Ebrahim, 2010b). The education departments were responsible for the payment of salaries for white, qualified teachers; subsidisation of private early childhood centres, establishing pre-primary classes in some schools and establishing training colleges for teacher training (Department of Basic Education, 2001b; Ebrahim, 2010b). In contrast, ECD provisioning for children of colour was severely limited. Government subsidies for coloured and Indian children in nursery schools was low and for black African children ECD services were minimal and confined to custodial care and the welfare sector (Ebrahim, 2010b). Clear racial disparities were also evident in terms of access to ECD services where one in three white infants and children had access to some form of ECD service; one in eight Indian and coloured children and one in sixteen black children (Department of Basic Education, 2001b). In addition, only 50% of rural children were making use of ECD services compared to their urban counterparts (ibid, 2001b).

As a result of the discriminatory laws and policies of apartheid education, black African children were rendered vulnerable and severely disadvantaged. "Poverty, low levels of nutrition, inadequate access to health care and education and a lack of

basic community and household resources” created a childhood at risk for many Black South African children (Department of Basic Education, 2001b: 10). By 1994, 6% of black children attended an ECD programme (Atmore, 2013: 153). Taylor (1989) maintains that for black African children at primary school, retention rates were very low, with 25% of black African children failing the first year of school and then dropping out of school permanently. However, one of the positives of government’s lack of will to invest in ECD services for black African children was the involvement of community organisations and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in the ECD sector that increased from the 1980s. During apartheid, the NGO sector developed an extensive resource base and expertise in the field of ECD. They also played a key-role in providing ECD services and training of ECD teachers during the 1980’s and 1990’s, particularly in disadvantaged contexts (Sherry & Draper, 2013; Ebrahim, 2010). To date, the NGO sector plays an important role in the provision of ECD services in the country, particularly for children from disadvantaged communities.

### **1.3.2 Early Childhood Education since 1994**

After decades of enforced segregation and legislative white racial exclusivity, the newly elected ANC government had an enormous task to expand ECD services and ensure equal access and transformation of the field. One of the critical moments for early childhood education (ECE) came after the election of Nelson Mandela as the first black democratic president of the country. Nelson Mandela pledged his commitment to ensuring that the needs of all South African children would be a national priority (Mandela, 1995). The provision of quality ECD was considered important for a number of reasons, viz., the promotion of children’s rights, economic development, addressing the skills crisis, redressing social and economic disparities and race and gender inequalities, promotion of democracy etc. (Department of Basic Education 2001(a): 5-7). In order to fulfil its tasks and commitment to children, the government committed to international conventions and developed policies that were aimed at improving the living conditions under which all children grow and develop.

In 1995, South African ratified the United Nations Conventions on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and in 1999 the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child was endorsed. These conventions are premised on the survival, development, promotion and participation rights of young children (United Nations Human Rights,

1990; Organisation of African Unity, 1999). The CRC and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child see the right to education as beginning from birth and closely linked to children's growth and development in the African context. The call is for governments to ensure that young children have access to care and education designed to promote children's well-being and their right to optimum development (Meier, 2014). Children's rights to adequate and quality (ECD) services and provisioning are also located in the South African Constitution and the Bill of Rights (1996). Furthermore, the Children's Act (No 38 of 2005) and its iterations address the concerns for the care, education and protection of young children. These ratifications and government policies attest to the broadening of the ECD equity agenda and growing political will shaped by international and local priorities.

It could be argued that the government's commitment to transform South African society through ECD reflects the complexities for local and global relevance. On the local front the rhetoric to reconstruct society through ECD was highly relevant. ECD was seen as a vehicle through which children could have access to their basic rights and a space where the inherited social, economic, and apartheid ideological system and vast material divisions based on race; gender and social class could be broken down (Department of Basic Education, 2001b). Consequently, the provision of quality ECD services at an early age was mobilised as a remedy to break the inter-generational poverty gap of disadvantaged women and children (Department of Basic Education, 2001a; 2001b; 2005). In addition, ECD was considered important for children's transition to formal schooling and central in identifying children at risk (Department of Basic Education, 2007). Furthermore, the pre-school years were seen as the ideal phase where democratic principles, human rights and values could be inculcated thereby ensuring the advancement of the transformation process.

Since 1994, various legislation, policies and programmes were established that specifically addressed children, their rights and their needs. In building a policy framework for ECD in South Africa, the National Programme of Action (NPA) was established to ensure that these various commitments were met (Republic of South Africa, 1996). The NPA enabled the facilitation of action towards the realisation of children's rights and mechanisms for co-ordinated action between governments, NGOs and other relevant entities (Department of Basic Education 2001b). These

efforts reflect government's commitment to locating children at the centre of all development plans and strategies.

In keeping with international trends, the government of South Africa defines ECD as the provision of programmes of education and care that caters for children's physical, emotional, social, cognitive and moral development for three age categories viz. birth to four, five to six and six to nine years (Department of Basic Education, 2001b); Ebrahim, 2014). Given this holistic view of children, the White Paper on Education and Training (Department of Basic Education, 1995) was released to advance the establishment of an integrated system for ECD. The paper called for inter-sectorial collaboration with representative bodies of ECD teachers, trainers, resource specialists, NGOs, development agencies and the private sector (Department of Basic Education, 2005). This led to the subsequent release of the Interim Policy on Early Childhood Development (1996), the White Paper for Social Welfare (1997) and the White Paper 5 on Early Childhood Development (2001). The White Paper 5 (Department of Basic Education, 2001) called for universal access to Grade R services for five-year-old children and an inter-sectorial strategic plan that would target services and programmes for children below Grade R. These layers of policies created a "complex ECD policy environment in the country – different government departments with interlocking mandates (policies and legislation) focused on similar and different sector-specific and age-specific service delivery to meet children's needs" (Department of Basic Education: 2012: 10). The policies reflect government's intention to increase access to ECD as well as to enhance the quality of services, specifically for those children from disadvantaged backgrounds (Department of Basic Education, Department of Social Development & Unicef, 2010).

Additionally, the National Integrated Plan (NIP) for ECD (2005-2010) was developed to address the needs of children from birth to 4 years of age and to co-ordinate the efforts of the different government sectors (Department of Basic Education, Department of Social Development & Department of Health, 2005). The NIP was an inter-sectorial framework and plan on how ECD needs would be operationalised in the sector. The vision of the NIP was to:

create an environment and opportunities where children have access to a

range of safe, accessible and high quality ECD programmes that include a developmentally appropriate curriculum, knowledgeable and well-trained staff and educators and comprehensive services that support their health, nutrition and social well-being in an environment that respects and supports diversity...These services would be further supported through training of teachers, parents and caregivers, infrastructure development, research and monitoring and evaluation (Department of Basic Education, 2005: 10; 2012: 4).

This vision further reveals government's commitment to address social and economic inequalities, apartheid related backlogs and the plight of poor and disadvantaged communities and families (Ebrahim, 2014). In addition, the NIP also recognised a variety of early childcare settings as alternatives to centre based provisioning. These included home care within a family, custodial care, private institutions, independent institutions, aftercare services and school based services (Department of Basic Education, 2005). The NIP also extended beyond "centre-based provisioning, early stimulation and learning to include health, nutrition, water and sanitation, targeting 2,5 million children (0-4), expectant and nursing mothers and community groups" (Department of Basic Education, 2012: 11).

To ensure equitable provisioning of ECD services, the different government departments have different roles and responsibilities. The Department of Social Development (DoSD) provides social services that include birth registration of infants and the development and implementation of psychosocial services. They are also responsible for monitoring and the registration of ECD centres, aftercare and family care (Department of Social Development, 2006). The DoSD provides guidelines for minimum standards for ECD facilities, teachers, management of the ECD centre, learning programmes and information related to health and safety, child development and teacher/teacher training (Sherry & Draper, 2013). Centres that register with the DoSD may also receive a subsidy on a per-child, per-day basis. The Department of Health (DoH) takes the lead in providing services for the management of childhood diseases, promoting healthy pregnancy, birth and infancy, immunisation and nutrition (Department of Basic Education, 2005). The Department of Basic Education (DoBE) is responsible for developing the capacity of teachers, caregivers, teachers and

community development workers so that they are able to deliver the integrated ECD programmes for children (Department of Education, 2012).

In addition, the NIP also brings together “knowledge and skills from different professions and disciplines such as non-governmental organisations (NGO’s) and communities to provide comprehensive services” (Department of Education, 2012: 39). Historically, the NGO sector has played an important role in the provision of ECD services in the country, particularly in disadvantaged communities. As a result they have developed an extensive resource base and expertise in the field of ECD. NGOs involved in ECD range from “small community based and/or faith based service providers operating in specific locations to large entities with comprehensive strategies and nationwide coverage” (Sherry & Draper, 2013: 1297). The different NGOs provide different services such as training of teachers, building capacity, providing funding, promoting awareness of the importance of ECD etc. A number of well-established NGOs also give input to government for policy development. The NGO sector thus plays an important role in the implementation of the NIP.

Furthermore, in 2002, Unicef in partnership with Yale and Colombia University and six developing countries viz. South Africa, Brazil, Ghana, Jordan, Paraguay and the Philippines were involved in developing early learning standards that were nationally validated (Ebrahim, 2014; Kagan, Britto & Engle, 2005). Against this international collaboration, inter-departmental collaboration and involvement of stakeholders such as ECD NGOs, the National Early Learning and Development Standards (NELDS) emerged (Department of Education & Unicef, 2009; Ebrahim, 2014). The NELDS is seen as a curriculum related policy initiative focusing specifically on the educational needs of children from birth to 4 years of age (Department of Education, 2009). The policy document draws heavily on child development discourse and child centred practices based on research from North America and Europe. For policy makers, the NELDS is seen as a “tool to develop indicators for school readiness and to monitor and evaluate progress of children on a national scale” (Ebrahim, 2014:70).

The NELDS caters for three age groups of young children viz. babies from birth to 8 months, toddlers from 18-36 months and young children between the ages of 3-4 (Department of Education & Unicef, 2009). Guidelines are provided for the development of stimulation programmes that are based on child development norms.

Suggestions are also provided on how ECD teachers, parents and caregivers can help children acquire the knowledge, skills and attitudes needed to become school ready. The NELDS has adopted the term 'desired results' to describe "broadly expected competencies that children should acquire and develop through planned and unplanned programmes and activities, both in the home and in institutionalised care and education environments" (Department of Education & Unicef 2009: 14). These 'desired results' are based on childhood development regimes of truth that cut across physical, social, emotional, cognitive, language, perceptual and moral and spiritual domains of growth and development. For each year group, competences are outlined against different child development norms and examples of activities are provided for how the 'desired results' can be achieved.

The NELDS was introduced as a curriculum initiative to address the country's "education, social, and economic transformation and development" (Department of Basic Education, 2007: 7). The NELDS was seen to provide the "first steps to addressing the guidance in the curriculum needs of the birth to four age cohort of ECD...and "help fill the gap with regard to children from birth to four" (Department of Basic Education, 2009: 7, 37). Mention is also made of how ECD teachers and carers can use the standards to develop comprehensive early learning and stimulation programmes to suit the needs of "different audiences and different contexts" (2009: 7,11). However, as Ebrahim (2014: 70) points out the "fragmentary field, lack of a unified vision, lack of capacity, reluctance to move out the comfort zone of existing practice, absence of a critical mass", unqualified, poorly trained and high illiteracy rates among many teachers and primary caregivers still dominate the field of ECD. Biersteker (2012) agrees when she says that 75,000 to 100,000 ECD teachers in South Africa require training or upgrading of their training and qualification levels. This has severe implications for how the NELDS will be received and implemented in the different ECD contexts.

A significant critique of the NELDS has been levelled against the way in which it was developed. As mentioned earlier, South Africa joined five countries with the guidance of experts from American universities and support from UNICEF to develop the early learning standards (Ebrahim, 2014; Kagan et.al, 2005). Child development became the starting point for the development of NELDS and was strongly influenced by the North American and European experience and research on child

development (Ebrahim, 2014, Miyahara & Meyers, 2008). These Euro-American ways of thinking about how children develop became the norm against which children could be assessed, ranked and classified. This has implications for the implementation of the NELDS as this normative understanding of child development silences South African children's ways of being and their development; the kinds of cultural capital they bring to their learning and what they know and what they are capable of doing. As argued by Viruru (2001), these exported constructions of how children develop masks the influences of the different ways in which the contextual realities contribute to early learning.

### **1.3.3 Early Childhood Education in the second and third decade of democracy**

The initiatives discussed above reveal government's commitment to enhancing social justice and equitable ECD service provisioning since 1994, which has had a direct influence on the lives of young children. For example, in 2001, there were 23,482 ECD facilities across South Africa with 1,030,473 children enrolled in these centres (Department of Basic Education, 2001b; Atmore, 2013). By 2012, 1,695 000 children between the ages of birth to 4 years were attending a day centre, crèche, ECD centre, playgroup, nursery school or pre-primary school (Statistics South Africa, 2013). Participation of children from birth to 4 years of age in ECD programmes has increased from 7% in 2002 to almost 45% in 2013 (Department of Basic Education, 2014). Despite this progress in the ECD sector, children in South Africa still face significant challenges particularly around "infrastructure, nutrition, programme options, ECD teacher development, institutional capacity and funding" (Atmore, 2013: 155). These challenges were also outlined in a survey commissioned by the Department of Basic Education, Social Development and UNICEF (2011). The survey revealed that good quality ECD programmes were found in 45% of public schools, 29% of registered ECD centres and 11% of unregistered community facilities (Department of Basic Education, Department of Social Development & Unicef, 2011: vi).

Despite the challenges in the ECD field, the South African government is still committed to reducing inequality and improving educational opportunities and access for all children (Department of Basic Education and Unicef, 2015:iii). For example, in April 2012, the Department of Performance and Monitoring and Evaluation co-ordinated a Diagnostic Review of the Early Childhood Development in

South Africa. The Policy and Performance of ECD and ECD services pointed to persistent fragmentation of legislative and policy framework, limited access to ECD services, un-coordinated service delivery and limited inter-sectorial coordination (Department of Education, 2012; Richter, 2012). Subsequently, the South African Integrated Programme of Action for Early Childhood Development-Moving Ahead (2013/2014-2016/7) was developed (DoSD, 2013). The aim of the new integrated plan is to ensure greater co-ordination between the different government departments and synergy between the different programmes undertaken by various departments in the areas of early childhood development (Department of Social Development, 2013). The new integrated plan is aimed at giving children a good start in life by building a solid foundation of physical, emotional, psychosocial, cognitive and healthy development.

One of the key government's initiatives for quality early childhood education at present is the development of The National Curriculum Framework (NCF). This framework arose from concerns about fragmentation in the ECD field, lack of guidelines for early care and education, poor quality provisioning and unequal ECD provisioning particularly in disadvantaged communities (Department of Basic Education and Unicef, 2015). To address the complexities of quality care and early education in a society riddled with inequities, the philosophical foundations of the NCF are based on social justice and equity principles drawn from the NELDS, The South African Constitution and policies for children and ECD teacher/teacher training. In addition, the South African birth to four curriculum (Gauteng and Free State), ideas from African writings on ECD and childhood and research in ECD from Australia and New Zealand were also consulted to provide a curriculum framework which is built on principles of social justice and equity for all children. The curriculum framework comprises of principles and main areas of development for babies, toddlers and young children (Department of Basic Education & Unicef, 2015). Presently, the NCF is being piloted in 10 ECD centres in each of the nine provinces of South Africa.

The latest development for the ECD field is the Draft National ECD Policy for the Republic of South Africa (Department of Social Development, 2015). Bearing in mind the need to cater for the diverse needs of all children and the thrust towards equitable provision, the Draft National ECD Policy guarantees and reiterates

government's commitment and associated responsibilities to universal and equitable access of ECD services. It is encouraging to note that the draft policy addresses public service intervention from conception until formal schooling or until the age of 8 in the case of children with developmental difficulties and/or disabilities (Department of Social Development, 2015).

In this section, I have provided an outline of government's commitments to ensuring equitable provisioning of ECD services through a multi-sectorial approach and ensuring adequate financing and monitoring of ECD services (Republic of South Africa, 2015). In the section that follows, I conceptualise early literacy education in South Africa, which provides a framework for the rationale for my study.

#### **1.4 Conceptualising Early Literacy Education in South Africa**

As discussed in the previous section, despite the focus of each policy document and the different legislative frameworks that reflect a commitment to the rights, needs, care, protection and well-being of the young child, it is evident that the South African ECD sector still faces significant challenges. One of the challenges relates to how quality ECD is constructed in ECD policies. Within the South African context, quality ECD programmes are associated with "child-centred learning environments with a focus on play and programmes that provide varied and age appropriate experiences for young children before formal schooling" (Department of Education, 2009:33). For policymakers these programmes provide indicators for "school readiness, to monitor and evaluate the progress of children on a national scale" (Ebrahim, 2014: 70). In addition, quality is equated with schooling outcomes in terms of standardisation of the school curriculum:

The early years of a child are critical for the acquisition of concepts, skills and attitudes that lay the foundations for lifelong learning. These include the acquisition of language, perceptual/motor skills required for learning to read and write, basic numeracy concepts and skills, problem-solving skills and a love for learning. With quality ECD provision, education efficiency would improve, as children would acquire the basic concepts, skills and attitudes required for successful learning and development prior to or shortly after entering the system. The system would be freed of under-age and under-prepared learners, who have proven to be the most at-risk in terms of school

failure and dropout (Department of Education, 2001b: Section 1; 2014: 11).

In current international and national debates around what constitutes quality ECD programme, several aspects of this statement are of particular importance. Firstly, the view of quality and its association with school readiness (Moss, 2012, 2013). Secondly, the statement promotes the image of learning as the acquisition of a set of discrete and autonomous skills that children require to be successful in school viz. language, perceptual/motor skills required for learning to read and write, basic numeracy concepts and skills, problem-solving skills etc. Finally, there is the assumption that the acquisition of these skills would lead to effective education of children, lifelong learning and efficiency of the system.

In the formulation of the aims of what constitutes quality ECD, there seems to be an implicit position on what constitutes early literacy. Literacy is narrowly defined which privileges certain kinds of literacies viz. school literacies and privileges certain kinds of literacy practices. The statement “the acquisition of language, perceptual/motor skills required for learning to read and write” points to a particular construction of literacy (Department of Basic Education, 2001b: Section 1; 2014: 11). Literacy is not only constructed as a set of discrete skills, which can be put into place if children first acquire “language, perceptual/motor skills”, but it is one of many in a category of “basic concepts, skills and attitudes required for successful learning” (Department of Education, 2001b: Section 1; 2014: 11). By linking the teaching of these basic skills to the concern that quality ECD provisioning would lead to children acquiring literacy and language skills, children are classified into two categories: those who acquire these ‘pre-literacy’ skills and those who are at risk for “school failure and drop-out” (Department of Education, 2001b: Section 1; 2014: 11). This seems to satisfy the aim of guaranteeing and improving education efficiency and efficacy (Department of Education, 2014).

I argue that one also needs to look at the ethical and social consequences of only seeing teaching as about the transmission of knowledge and skills. This does not mean that the cognitive/autonomous approach to teaching of literacy is inferior, nor does it mean that standards would be lowered with regards to cognitive expectations. My concern is that ECD programmes seem to be moving away from the original supporting goals of promoting children’s rights, needs and participation in

quality ECD programmes. The focus seems to be on supporting the development of a holistic child towards a narrowly defined standard of what constitutes literacy. This can also be seen as a regime of schoolification of ECD services by allowing formal schooling to outmanoeuvre early education and care (Moss, 2013).

In addition, in keeping with the schoolification of early education and care, explanations have been given of this need for a shift towards academic learning. This need is based on regimes of truth about how children develop and become literate. In South African policy documents there is the belief that “most children move through similar stages of development” and an outline of particular skills, knowledge and abilities that children in different age group are expected to attain for different domains of development is provided (Department of Education, 2001a: Section 5.1; 2009: 13). Scientifically based regimes of truth about literacy development focus on print awareness, alphabetic knowledge, phonetic awareness etc. as pre-requisites for later literate behaviour. This unquestioning state of literacy as a linear development leaves the current truths about how children develop essentially unchallenged, which discounts young children’s positioning as social actors, issues of diversity and socially situated literacy practices.

Consequently, I understand the field of early literacy as being both a social and discursive practice characterised by fluidity and complexity rather than as being about pre-existing categories. In addition, I see early literacy as effects of power and knowledge in different contexts of practice (Foucault, 1980). Furthermore, I make the assumption that the field of ECD in general, the policy frameworks and the contexts within which practice is enacted create discursive spaces for individuals to be [re]constituted and to [re]constitute themselves as certain types of subjects, viz. *the school ready child, the becoming child, the good teacher* etc. Accordingly, I seek to make visible literacy as social practice in early childhood centres for 3-4 year old children by identifying the early childhood teachers discourses of literacy in order to understand how these discourses become regimes of truth and embedded within practices: “regimes of practice” (Foucault, 1991b: 75). These ‘regimes of practice’ are “programmes of conduct which have both prescriptive effects regarding what is to be done and codifying effects regarding what is known” (Foucault, 1991b: 75). The concept of discourse as “practices which constitute the objects of which they speak” warrants a discussion around how these discourses inform early literacy

practices and the effects of this on children, learning and teaching at the two early childhood centres (Foucault, 1972: 49).

### **1.5 Rationale and research questions**

Thus far, I have provided a broad-brush stroke of the historical, political, care and educational dimensions that warrant a study on literacy in ECD. In particular, this study is dedicated to troubling the dominant ways in which literacy is understood and practised. Specifically, I problematise early literacy and literacy practices by making visible early childhood teachers' discourses to reveal the dominance in thoughts and actions for 3-4 year olds in two early childhood centres. At this juncture, I need to make clear that the findings in this thesis relate to just two teachers at the ECD centres and the results might be different in other contexts. However, while the sample was small, it does provide some insight into how teachers discourses of literacy are interrelated with systems of knowledge, together with social practices and relations, which work together to produced subjectivities of teachers, children and parents in different ways.

It is anticipated that new understandings would emerge from the reading of literacy as both a social and discursive practice. As argued by Street (1984, 2000, 2005), Barton and Hamilton (2000) and Barton, Hamilton and Ivanic (2000), discourses as social representations of reality are central to a social theory of literacy. Therefore, literacy cannot be just seen as a set of competencies but rather as different **practices** embedded in different political relations, ideological practices, symbolic meanings and discourses (Papen, 2005). Foucault's (1980) concept of discourse was significant in understanding how literacy was used to signify "literacy-in-(social inter)-action", to the construction of meaning and to the way in which literacy as a body of knowledge operated in relation to power and authority at the two ECD centres (Burman, Kottler, Levett & Parker, 1997: 8) In this sense, discourse signifies literacy in use.

In order to provide a fresh perspective of literacy in the South African context, I resisted the normative definition of literacy as a technical, autonomous skill. The autonomous view of literacy is based on the assumption that literacy has effects on other social and cognitive processes "irrespective of the social conditions and cultural interpretations of literacy associated with programmes and education sites

for its dissemination” (Street, 2005: 417). Instead, I make use of Barton and Hamilton’s (2000: 8) definition of literacy, where literacy is defined as “a set of social practices” that are observable events, which are mediated by written texts as a way of working with literacy. In addition, I take the view that the kinds of questions that I raise in this thesis can be best approached by looking at the ways in which the ECD teachers’ concepts, beliefs and assumptions about literacy are formed and grounded in their actions and by socially constructed ways of seeing the word i.e. they are grounded in discourse. Such discourses are interrelated with practices thus affecting the design and implementation of early literacy programmes and activities for the 3-4 year old child.

The focus on how literacy is thought of and contextually and socially situated is important because literacy is considered a fundamental human right: a tool of personal empowerment and a means to social, cultural and human development. In addition, it is considered one of the core skills required for academic achievement in schooling and lifelong learning. However, within the South African context, the nature and use of literacy, for whom, under which circumstances, and for what purposes is highly contentious. The reasons for this includes the overwhelming hegemony of English, the under-preparedness of teachers to teach in diverse, complex contexts, the educational opportunities afforded to different children in different contexts, inadequate training of ECD staff, etc. (Spaull, 2013; Sherry & Draper, 2013; Mashiya, 2011). For the majority of South African children, these challenges make the pathways to literacy difficult to navigate.

In trying to tackle the country’s low literacy levels, the Department of Basic Education has focused on “school quality issues, such as management and leadership, quality of teaching and coverage of curriculum” (O’Carroll & Hickman, 2012). What is evident is that these remedial strategies and classroom-based interventions have had a limited impact on literacy and classroom practices. For example, the recent Annual National Assessment reveals an increase in the proportion of children achieving at a moderate grade appropriate level (40%-49%) from 61% in 2013 to 63% in 2014. However, as argued by Spaull (2013: 437) these national averages mask the severe inequalities of the South African education system as “however, one measures learner performance, and at whichever grade one chooses to test, the vast majority of children are significantly below where they should be in terms of

curriculum attainment and have not reached their numeracy and literacy milestones”. This is also evident in the report on learner retention where the Department of Education notes that Grade 1 repetitions are the highest due to serious deficiencies in school entrants’ learning and unsuitable learning programmes beyond the reach of many children’s capacity (Department of Education, 2007).

Research has shown that if we are to improve the schooling success of all children, we need to provide them with a strong foundation for learning prior to entry into school (Meier, 2014; Spaul, 2013; Ebrahim, 2010b). Specifically, the focus should be on early childhood development prior to schooling with explicit reference to literacy as social practice and the cultural and ideological processes within which literacy is practised (Prinsloo & Baynham, 2008). The way in which early childhood teachers construct literacy has an impact on how literacy is practised and the kind of literate child that is constructed. Luke (1992) contends that literacy is the space where the training of the subject occurs and the space where the “technology of the self” emerges (Foucault, 1988:18). In order to make sense of this, this research also aims to discover how power/knowledge and disciplinary technologies operate to construct the ideal literate child and how children themselves become regulated. Early childhood centres for 3-4 year old children were purposively chosen for this study. The rationale for this was based on the belief that ECD centres are not neutral zones but, critical institutional spaces, where young children are initiated into the beginnings of literacy training and the beginnings of their subjection to the disciplinary power of adults who care for and educate them. In particular, I wanted to focus on how the early childhood teachers’ literacy pedagogical practices work to regulate and normalise the literate subject.

From literature it is evident that the literate subject is constituted and regulated through teachers’ pedagogical practices and the child’s body/mind becomes the target of pedagogical power (Luke, 1992; Manyak, 2004). Foucault maintains that disciplinary power functions at the level of the body/mind because “it reaches into the very grain of the individuals, touches their bodies and inserts itself into their actions, attitudes, their discourses, learning processes and everyday lives” (Foucault, 1980:39). Foucault adds that where power operates there is also resistance. This has significance as it points to how children and teachers negotiate their subjectivities by allowing “individuals to affect by their own means or with the help of

others a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct and ways of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection or immortality... (Foucault, 1988: 18).

Considering the above, the main objective of the study was to make visible literacy as social practice in early childhood centres that cater for children from 3 to 4 years of age. I am aware that the word 'visible' maybe seen as possessing authorial power. My intention was not to exert my power as the 'author' of this PhD by giving myself the credentials of the 'knower'. But rather, I have tried to produce a text that denaturalises and problematises early childhood teachers' discourses of literacy as social practice at the ECCs. The intention was to generate interpretations of teachers as they go about their work at the centres in a way that does justice to the complexity of their work. In addition, I hoped to construct meanings of competing and contradictory discourses and institutional requirements that worked to construct the ECD teacher and children in different ways.

To achieve this objective, a number of supporting objectives were designed. These included:

- To identify different theoretical ways of thinking about literacy as social practice in early childhood centres.
- To explore discursive practices that informs research in literacy as social practice in early childhood centres.
- To identify the teacher discourses that informs early literacy as social practice.
- To examine how these discourses inform the practice of early childhood teachers.
- To arrive at new ways of thinking about literacy as social practice in early childhood centres.

Consequently, the main research question for this study was framed as follows:

- How can early literacy as social practice be made visible in early childhood centres for 3 and 4 year olds?

For the purpose of this research I view literacy as both a social and discursive practice. The notion of literacy as social practice is based on the assumption that how we value and use literacy depends on both literacy related and broader social and cultural meanings, values and representations (Street, 1995; Barton & Hamilton, 1998). Discourses are therefore part of this social understanding of literacy.

A number of sub-questions were developed to address the different dimensions of the main research question. These sub-questions worked as organisers for the different chapters in the study:

- What theoretical understandings enable new ways of thinking about literacy as social practice in early childhood centres for 3-4 year olds? (Chapter 2).
- What are the discursive practices that inform research in literacy as social practice? (Chapter 3)
- What are the early childhood teachers' discourses that inform literacy as social practice at the centres and what are their effects? (Chapter 4)
- How have the early childhood teachers' discourses of literacy as social practice informed their practices at the centres and what are their effects? (Chapters 5 and 6)
- What new understandings emerge from this reading of literacy as social practice? (Chapter 7)

The main research question and the sub-questions described above called for a particular theoretical framework and research design that would produce the kinds of understandings that my research inquiry required. In the next section, I discuss the theoretical framework and research design that were used in my study.

## **1.6 Theoretical framework and research design**

This study was designed as an investigation into how literacy as social practice is constructed and how these constructions influence practice. As such, I started with the assumption that literacy is both a social and discursive practice. Accordingly, I made use of literacy theory from New Literacy Studies (NLS) and Foucault's conceptualisation of discourse (Foucault, 1980). Discourses or regimes of social representation are central to an understanding of the social theory of literacy (Street, 2000, 2005). From this perspective, literacy is seen as embedded in political

relations, ideological practices, symbolic meanings and discourses (Papen, 2005). It therefore follows that literacy cannot **only** be defined as a set of technical, autonomous skills but as multiple literacies that are socially embedded (Street, 2005; Barton & Hamilton, 2000). Because literacy is a social construction that varies from context to context, its uses are also embedded in relations of power. Literacy is thus social as well as a socially situated practice. What counts as literacy depends on its purpose, the people involved and the social and political context within which literacy is practised.

The concept of literacy as a socially situated practice builds on the assumption that how we value literacy is based on both literacy related as well as broader social and cultural meanings, values and representations (Street, 2000; 2005). Discourses are part of this social understanding of literacy. Foucault's concept of discourse was a powerful tool that I used to inform this study. For Foucault, discourse is the "general domain of all statements, and sometimes as a regulated practice that accounts for a number of statements, and sometimes as a regulated practice that accounts for a number of statements" (1972:80). Discourse involves certain conditions that enable people, according to the rules or false statements to be constituted as subject (Foucault, 1972). Foucault (1992) maintains that discourses are forms of representation – they are bounded bodies of knowledge that, together with social practices, work to construct and define forms of subjectivity. In the case of this study, I paid particular attention to the constitutive nature of discourses; how they worked together to constitute literacy, learning, teaching and children at the early childhood centres of my study. Foucault's theory of discourse is not without criticism. Because Foucault maintains that everything can be reduced to discourse, he has been accused of discourse determinism (See Selby, 2007 for further discussions). To circumvent such critiques, I have made use of Foucault's work on power/knowledge as well as the way in which personal, historical, socio-cultural and political components work to construct the different subjectivities of the participants in my study. My analytical framework thus comprised of the concepts, literacy events and literacy practices drawn from New Literacy Studies and Foucault's theory of discourse, power/knowledge, disciplinary techniques of power and subjectivity to understand how discourse, power/knowledge intersect to construct children, teaching and learning in particular ways.

The use of theory from NLS and Foucault's concepts of discourse, power/knowledge, disciplinary technologies and subjectivity called for a methodological inquiry that would elicit particular understandings that were considered fundamental to this study. This study adopted a qualitative approach which enabled me to look for "complexities of the social world" to develop a better understanding of literacy as social practice for 3-4 year old children (Edwards, 2001:117). I made use of an ethnographic approach to look at how literacy was used and the meanings that were attached to its different uses in particular contexts. Ethnography allowed for a holistic account of the beliefs, intentions, views, perspectives and values of individuals in their real life settings (Siraj-Blatchford & Siraj-Blatchford, 2010). Ethnographic tools such as semi-structured interviews and classroom observations were used to understand how literacy and literacy practices were embedded within wider social, cultural and political discourse.

I was particularly interested in how discourses, power and knowledge intersected to construct literacy, learning, teaching and children in different ways. To understand how discourse "construct the objects of which they speak" I used a Foucauldian genealogical approach to discourse analysis (Foucault, 1972: 54). As a methodological tool, Foucauldian discourse analysis is not prescriptive but provides a useful tool for considering how discourse, power and knowledge intersect to construct individuals (Foucault, 1980). Genealogy was an appropriate fit for my inquiry as it enabled me to produce new ways of seeing and thinking about literacy as a social practice.

Foucault's genealogical approach to discourse analysis allowed me to record a "history of the present" and interpretations as they "appear...on the stage of historical process" (Foucault, 1980: 86). Genealogy looks to inquire into "processes, procedures and techniques through which truth, knowledge and beliefs are produced" (Meadmore, Hatcher & McWilliam, 2005: 463). Genealogy was particularly useful as it enabled me to firstly, identify the early childhood teachers' discourses of literacy by looking at how it was constructed by the teachers and the centres at which they worked. Secondly, I was able to trace the historical origins of these discourses to make sense of the processes, procedures and techniques through which truth; power, knowledge and beliefs produce particular regimes of truth. Finally, genealogy allowed me to make sense of how these regimes of truth

allowed certain discourses to be “accepted and function as true” by looking at which literacies were legitimated, silenced and marginalised and the effects of this on the subjectivities and subject positionings of the teachers and children at the centre (Foucault, 1980: 13). Both the ethnographic methods and genealogical discourse analysis allowed me to study literacy in everyday, real life contexts and facilitated an understanding of how and what the early childhood teachers do and how what they do has an effect on teaching, learning and children at the early childhood centres.

The following section provides an overview of the thesis. I provide an outline of the focus of and interconnection between the different chapters.

### **1.7 Overview of chapters**

Throughout my thesis I have chosen to address the early childhood teachers as teachers. ECD policy makes use of the word **practitioner** to refer to the “different roles and responsibilities, levels of expertise”, which includes “practitioners, trainers, facilitators, lecturers, caregivers and development officers...who provide services in homes, centres and schools” (Department of Basic Education, 2001a: 23; Department of Social Development, 2006: 8). Whilst policy makes use of the term practitioner, the early childhood ‘teachers’ thought of themselves as teachers. For example, when I asked Teacher Shari how she saw her role she responded by saying, “I am a teacher” (Interview: 01:03:2013). Teacher Dee also saw herself as a teacher as she said, “you have to teach language through play...through association...through experiencing” (Interview: 28:02:2013). In addition, the children at the centres also thought of the ‘practitioners’ as teachers as they referred to them as Teacher Shari and Teacher Dee. I have chosen to refer to both the participants as teachers as I believe that this was how they had constructed themselves.

The thesis consists of 7 chapters and in this section I provide an outline of the focus of each chapter to show how they connected.

I start **Chapter 1** by making a connection between the social construction of a humane society and its implications for social justice and transformation of children’s lives in the field of early childhood education. As part of this struggle, I insert myself into this introductory chapter with a personal narrative, which maps my personal journey from teacher, to teacher educator and researcher. Thereafter, I provide an

overview of the early childhood landscape, which sets the scene for conceptualising early literacy education, which provided a framework for the rationale for the study. The aims and the research questions are also sketched. Thereafter, the theoretical framework and methodological design are delineated. I conclude by providing an overview of the thesis, to reveal the interconnection between the subsequent chapters.

In **Chapter 2**, I expand on the theoretical framework that informed my study to address my first research sub-question: *What theoretical understandings enable new ways of thinking about literacy as social practice in early childhood centres for 3-4 year olds?* To answer my research question, I provide an outline of the pathways I navigated to make visible literacy as social practice for 3-4 year olds. My analytical framework comprised of concepts drawn from New Literacy Studies: literacy events and literacy practices and Foucault's theory of discourse, power/knowledge, disciplinary techniques of power and subjectivity to understand how discourse, power/knowledge intersect to construct children, teaching and learning in particular ways.

**Chapter 3** describes the qualitative methodological approach I used to answer my second research sub-question: *What are the discursive practices that inform research in literacy as social practice?* Firstly, I provide a justification for why I made use of a both an ethnographic and genealogical approach to researching literacy as a social practice. Thereafter, I discuss the techniques of sampling, the contexts, the participants and the data generation methods that were used. A description of I how I made use of Foucault's toolbox to construct a genealogical framework to analyse my data then follows. I reflect on my positionality as a researcher where I discuss the power dynamics inherent within the research process and the steps I took to circumvent this. Finally, issues of validity, authenticity and ethics are explicated.

**Chapter 4** is the first of my data analysis chapter, which attends my third research sub-question: *What are the early childhood teachers' discourses that inform literacy as social practice at the centres and what are their effects?* The following definitional discourses are explored: literacy as skill, the becoming child, the good teacher, and the good parent. Firstly, I identified the different ways in which literacy as social practice was constituted through "types of enunciations" or statements, which

“constitute the objects of which they speak” (Foucault, 1972: 205; 54). For each of the discourses, I examined the discursive construction of the truth objects viz. how do these statements define and constitute the truth objects (Graham, 2006). Thereafter, I discuss how these truth-objects contributed to literacy as social practice’s valorised status i.e. how do these truth-objects become regimes of truth? To do this, I looked at the different ways in which literacy as social practice at the centres was located within wider discourses – how it was described, recognised, functioned and classified. In tracing the constitutive nature of the statements, one is able to identify discursive formations from within a specific field of knowledge. Lastly, I looked at what these discourses do and what are the effects of what it does. Discourse positions people in particular ways and the subject positions that one takes up or different ways in which others are positioned offer discursive locations from which to speak and act (Willig, 2003). At the same time I was able to identify different discursive formations that worked to marginalise, exclude or silence other discursive practices.

**Chapter 5** and **6** are the data analysis chapters that address my fourth research sub-question: *How have the early childhood teachers’ discourses of literacy as social practice informed their practices at the centres and what are their effects?*

In **Chapter 5**, I look at how time and space were used as key disciplinary techniques to regulate children’s bodies/minds and how children began to regulate themselves (Foucault, 1977). I provide examples of how the early childhood centre’s buildings, classroom spaces and daily routines were used to organise children’s bodies and learning. I also show how children resisted certain temporal and spatial regulations by strategically adopting different subject positioning thereby displaying their individual agency.

In **Chapter 6**, I look at everyday classroom literacy practices, the kinds of literate children these practices engender and its normalising effects on children. From my analysis I have conceptualised literacy practices as a means of constructing the school ready literate child through regimes of truth based on child development and readiness discourse.

In my final chapter, **Chapter 7**, I weave together the theoretical, methodological and empirical threads to answer my research question: *What new understandings emerge from this reading of literacy as social practice?* To do this, I reconsider each research question. This chapter also provides some implications and significance of the study to the field of early childhood education. Some possibilities for future research are also explicated on.

## Chapter 2

### Developing a theoretical framework to research literacy as social practice

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#### 2.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I map the theoretical framework that I used to examine my research problem and to orient my study. Importantly, this chapter serves to locate the selected theories epistemologically and offers a rationale for the theoretical orientations expressed in my study. Seeking to answer the main question of the study viz. *how can literacy as social practice be made visible in early childhood centres for 3-4 year olds*, led me to ask broader questions around the teacher discourses that inform literacy as social practice, how these discourses position early childhood teachers in terms of who they are and what it is *within* themselves and what it is *about* themselves that feeds into what and how they teach young children. Consequently, the intention of this chapter is to develop a theoretical framework that explained the nexus between literacy as social practice and discourse. This was based on the assumption that discourses create discursive spaces for teachers and children to be “constituted and reconstituted through discursive practices” as certain types of subjects within the early literacy classroom (Osgood, 2010: 25).

Chapter 2 addresses my research sub-question and looks to unpack: *What theoretical understandings enable new ways of thinking about literacy as social practice in early childhood centres for 3-4 year olds?* (See Chapter 1, Section 1.4). To foreground the main discussion, in the first section (Section 2.2), I provide a brief discussion of the dominant epistemological orientations of literacy as social practice. I do this to highlight the ways in which the epistemological origins of literacy as social practice situates literacy directly within our social worlds, embedded in daily social and cultural practices (Jones-Diaz, 2007). Concepts drawn from New Literacy Studies (literacy events and literacy practices) were used to connect literacy practices to wider social, political, historical and economic discourses. In Section 2.3, I provide an explanation of how the concept of discourse was used as an operational term, which I considered central to the understanding of the methodological and analytical framework used in my study. The intention was to

examine the discourses of literacy as a social practice; to see how power relations between different discourses operated and to understand how power was used to construct the 3-4 year old literate child.

For Foucault (1972: 80), discourses are “the general domain of all statements, and sometimes as a regulated practice that accounts for a number of statements”. Discourses are form of representation. They are bounded in forms of knowledge, together with social practices that work to define and construct the individual. Florence (1994:462) maintains that discourses involve certain “conditions that enable people, according to the rules of true and false statements” to be constituted as subjects. As regulated statements or utterances, discourses work together in ways that are knowable, has depth, consistency and substance. In the case of this study, I looked at different ways in which discourses interconnected, competed and came together to constitute the literate object/subject (Foucault, 1981). To understand how discourses “constitute the objects of which they speak”, I made use of Foucault’s work on power/knowledge (Section 2,4); disciplinary techniques of power (Sections 2,5 and 2,6) and subjectivity (Section 2,7) to inform my research project (Foucault, 1972: 49). Throughout the different sections, I employ literacy as a disciplinary body of knowledge to understand how children were disciplined to become literate.

## **2.2 The social turn: New Literacy Studies (NLS)**

During conversations with my research supervisor and an international early childhood expert from the United Kingdom, I talked about my experiences of teaching literacy and how my understandings of literacy had shifted over the years. These understandings of literacy had expanded to seeing literacy as more than skills but also being embedded in different cultural, historical, political and social contexts. My research supervisor suggested that I begin reading work from the field of New Literacies Studies (NLS), which represents a tradition that considers the nature of literacy. The focus of researchers working in the tradition of NLS is not so much on literacy as the acquisition of skills but rather on literacy as a social practice. The research that emanates form NLS is multi-disciplinary and ranges from socio-cultural anthropology (Heath 1983, Street 1984), cultural psychology (Scribner & Cole 1981) and socio and applied linguistics (Gee 1990, 1996, 2000, 2014; Barton & Hamilton, 2000; Barton, 2006; Baynham & Prinsloo, 2009).

Conceptualisations of how children become literate have primarily been located within the discourses of child development and constructivism (Jones-Diaz & Beecher, 2000; Cannella, 2007; 2010). However, within recent years there have been significant reconceptualisations about what constitutes literacy. The works of Lankshear and Knobel (2006), Gee (1990), Luke (1992), Barton, Hamilton and Ivanic (2000), Hall (1997; 2002) amongst others, have been influential in reframing and broadening my understanding of literacy and literacy practices. Framed within a socio-cultural paradigm, theory and research in literacy within social sciences and humanities from the 1970's entailed what Gee (2000: 180) calls a 'social turn', which involved a "shift away from the focus on behaviour...and individual minds towards a focus on social and cultural interactions". Scholars working from within a NLS framework place greater emphasis on the social practice view of literacy with a focus on literacy in use across different contexts. For my study, NLS offered me a way to understand the complex dynamic between the child and the early childhood teacher within the early childhood context and the ways in which classroom literacy events were informed by wider socio-cultural literacy practices and discourses (Larson & Marsh, 2005).

Scribner and Cole (1981) were the first researchers to introduce the term practice to conceptualise literacy stressing the social rather than the individual dimension of literacy (Gee, 1990). The question of the cognitive effectiveness of literacy (defined as the ability to read and write) was re-defined by their ethnographic study of the Vai people in Liberia in *The Psychology of Literacy*. Scribner and Cole (1981) were able to differentiate between school effects and literacy effects and showed how cognitive attributes were not products of literacy itself but rather, were the outcomes of particular social practices. The researchers maintain that it makes no sense to "discuss literacy and its social and psychological implications as though literacy entails the same skills whenever people read and write" (Scribner & Cole, 1981:132). The study questioned the notions held by Luria (1976) and Olson (1976) and others who believed that literacy had specific cognitive consequences and that these were acquired in particular social practices such as schooling. The study provided an important thread in the development of a NLS approach to researching literacy and is widely quoted as evidence supporting the conception of literacy as social practice.

### **2.2.1 The literacy event**

Within NLS, the literacy event is defined as observable situations in which reading, writing or any related semiotic systems play a role in the observed action (Heath, 1983). Heath's ethnographic study entitled *Ways with Words* focused on the communicative practices of three communities in the Piedmont Carolinas in the United States over a period of ten years (1983). The unit of analysis in Heath's (1983) study was the literacy event which is described as "any occasion in which a text and talk around the text is integral to the nature of the participants' interactions and their interpretive processes" (Heath, 1983:93). Heath (1983) interprets these literacy events in relation to the wider socio-cultural patterns of which individuals are part of, e.g. patterns of caregiver roles, use of space and time, age and sex segregation. Heath's study revealed that children acquired literacy and language in different ways, which was a result of how they became socialised into the norms and values of their communities. This study points to the cultural situatedness of literacy and revealed that some traditions were closer to the ways of schooling than others, consequently advantaging certain groups of children over others.

Central to the literacy event are activities where "literacy has a function, the actions that surround the activities and the people that comprise them" (Ivanic, 1998:63). Barton and Hamilton (2000) maintain that some literacy events may be usual, repeated activities linked to routine sequences that are usually part of formal procedures and expectations within social institutions or structured by more informal expectations and pressures from different groups of individuals. In my study, examples of literacy events in early childhood classrooms include small group activities, story time, whole class activities, free choice activities or early morning ring activities which are considered routinised and everyday literacy pedagogical practices. The repeated nature of the literacy event from the rituals, the actions, the procedures and the relationships provided me with an understanding of how the literacy event became part of everyday literacy routines as well as expectations for what constituted literacy, learning, teaching and a literate child in early childhood classrooms for 3-4 year old children. In addition, I was able to understand how the social actions of the individuals at the early childhood centre and the material and social conditions helped shape those actions (Bloome, Carter, Otto; & Shuart-Faris, 2010).

During my engagement with literature, I came to the realisation that if I used the concept of the literacy event on its own, I would have limited understanding of how the early childhood teachers' actions were simultaneously related to various layers of social engagement that extended beyond the literacy event (Bloome & Bailey, 1992). In the next section, I focus on how I used the concept of literacy practice. This concept allowed for a visibility of how the meanings, intentions and actions around an event were constructed and the kinds of social and cultural models that the early childhood teachers drew on in different social situations at the early childhood centres.

### **2.2.2 Literacy practices**

The concept literacy practices is used by researchers in NLS to describe how patterns of actions observed in the literacy event are related to broader social and cultural models that people bring to the event and the meanings attached to the event. Literacy practices include the literacy event, the knowledge and assumptions about the event; the social and cultural models underpinning the event and how it links to wider social and cultural practices and discourses (Barton & Hamilton, 2000; Street, 2000; 2005; Gee, 2000; Hall, 2002). In *Literacy Theory and Practice*, Street (1984) developed the concept of literacy practice to describe the social and linguistic practices that included the literacy events. This social practice view of literacy is based on the ideological model of literacy, which is seen in direct opposition to earlier conceptions of literacy, which were based on what Street referred to as the autonomous model of literacy (Street, 1984; 2000). He maintained that the autonomous model saw literacy as the acquisition of technical skills, which once acquired, affect social and cognitive processes (Street, 1993). Street (1993) says that the proponents of this model believe that the mastery of reading and writing leads to logical thinking, critical enquiry and self-conscious reflection, and an ability to distinguish between myth and history, science and illusion, democracy and autocracy, elaborated and restricted codes.

Street (2005) defines the ideological model as a social practice, rather than as an autonomous, and unified set of neutral skills. He questioned the 'autonomous model' of literacy that claimed that literacy has cognitive effects apart from the context in which it exists and the uses to which it is put in a given culture. Street (1995:2) argues that:

the concept of literacy practices is always pitched at a higher level of abstraction and refers to both the behaviour and the social and cultural conceptualisations that give meaning to the uses of reading and or writing. Literacy practices incorporate not only literacy events as empirical occasions to which literacy is integral, but also the folk models of those events and the ideological preconceptions that underpin them.

For Street (2005: 79), literacy is always “embedded in socially constructed and epistemological principles” and framed in social, cultural and institutional ideologies. Street (2003: 2826) argues that the ideological model “problematizes what counts as literacy in a given time and place, asking whose literacies are dominant and whose are marginalized or resistant”.

Street (2000: 11) asserts that the social practice view of literacy attempts to “handle the events and the patterns around literacy event and links them to something broader of a cultural and social kind”. This social view of literacy had value for my study as it was used as a unit of analysis to understand how the early childhood teachers drew on different social and cultural models for how literacy should be used in different social situations. Based on my engagement with literature on early literacy, I made the assumption that the early childhood teachers’ training, ideologies, personal literacy experiences and teaching experiences will provide them with cultural models of what constitutes effective literacy learning and teaching. They will thus bring certain ideologies, social and cultural models to the literacy event, certain assumptions about what makes the event work and meanings attached to the literacy event. These cultural and social models are everyday theories (schemas, images, metaphors, storylines etc.) about the world that tells people what is normal or typical, from a particular discourse (Rogers, 2007). For my study, the literacy practices of early childhood teachers refer to broader cultural conceptions of ways of thinking about and doing literacy in different cultural contexts. While these cultural and social models exist in the early childhood teachers’ heads, they also exist in the literacy events, objects, cultural artefacts and social practices that surround them.

Street’s (2003) concepts of autonomous and ideological definitions of literacy have important implications for this study of literacy as social practice in early childhood

centres for 3-4 year olds. The Department of Basic Education (DoBE) advocates a balanced approach to literacy teaching that combines the phonetic and the whole language approach to teaching literacy in the pre-school and Foundation Phase (Department of Basic Education 2008). This means that teachers are expected to teach literacy skills within the context of the literacy event in combination with the phonetic approach. However, as argued by Prinsloo and Stein (2004), the skills-based approach to teaching literacy is highly influential in the working theories of many South African teachers. These theories have been strongly influenced by child development and Piaget's (1962) stages of cognitive development. This skill-based approach sees literacy as a unified set of neutral skills that can be universally applied across all contexts, irrespective of culture or diversity (Street, 1993). This approach has also become known as readiness and phonic-based instruction. These approaches to teaching literacy continue to be highly influential in teacher training programmes and have become a normative and universal truth for pedagogic practice within the South African context (Prinsloo & Bloch, 1999; Prinsloo & Stein, 2004; Dixon, 2010; Ebrahim, 2014; Lemphane & Prinsloo, 2014).

What is noticeable in the South African context is the failure of the skills based approach to impact positively on learner literacy levels of young children in South Africa. Fleisch's (2008) review of reading and mathematics levels of primary school children in South Africa revealed that in the seven years of schooling, children from working class and poor homes tend to acquire a restricted set of knowledge and skills. They tend to read at a mostly limited functional level and can write but not with fluency or confidence. While Fleisch (2008) attributes these problems to wider social issues in South African society, he also noted that the language practices in school were not aligned with family and community literacy practices. Similar findings were revealed in Gains (2010) and Dixon's (2011) studies of early literacy learning and pedagogy in Foundation Phase classrooms. The studies showed that the majority of children living and learning in rural and urban townships were not benefitting from this educational provision while those from more privileged backgrounds continued to do so. These studies reveal the limitation of the skills based/autonomous model of literacy development as it fails to provide an understanding of the socio-cultural contexts within which literacy is practised.

For Baynham and Prinsloo (2009), the social practice view of literacy is a concrete human activity that involves what people do with literacy, the association they have with what they do, how they construct its value and the ideologies that surround it. Thus the concept of literacy practices are “pitched at a higher level of abstraction and refer to the behaviours and the social and cultural conceptualisations” that give meaning to the uses of literacy (Street, 1993: 14). For example, the behaviours and activities of the early childhood teachers in my study include “values, attitudes, feelings, patterns of privileging, purposes” of literacy, learning, teaching and children (Street, 1993:12). The early childhood teachers will therefore recognise and make decisions about what is appropriate or not for the literacy event and what correct instance of the event can be derived from the appropriate literacy practice.

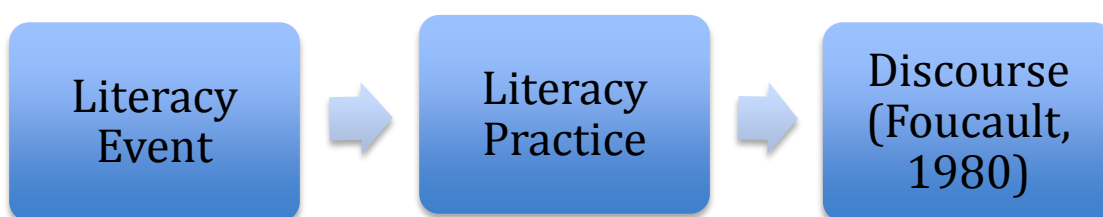
Barton and Hamilton (2000) claim that literacy practices offer a powerful tool for conceptualising the social situations within which literacy practices are embedded and how these situations help shape literacy practices. These social situations usually involve circulating relations of power, which make certain literacy practices more powerful and dominant than others. Researchers who work within this tradition have demonstrated how certain literacy practices draw onto different domains of life such as home, school, work, community (Heath, 1983; Street, 1984; Barton & Hamilton, 2000; Hall, 2002; Papen, 2005). For example, Heath (1984) showed how home literacy practices were seen as *noncomplementary* to school literacy practices. Gee’s (1990, 2000) work on primary and secondary discourse and Rogers (2007) study of family literacy practices demonstrate the importance of the home as the primary space in people’s literacy lives and the space where people first develop their sense of identity.

Studies working from within NLS have also shown how children negotiate the social situation they find themselves in. For example, Bloome and his co-researchers’ (2010) study of language and literacy events showed how children negotiate social situations where their literacy practices were marginalised by being *oppositional* and directly rejecting dominant literacy practices. Other studies illustrate how people conform to certain practices by becoming assimilated into dominant literacy practices (Guthrie, 1985) or adaptive where individuals alter certain literacy practices so that they are consistent with their own (Suarez, 2002). These studies demonstrate how people draw on different literacy practices to inform their actions but also take

agency in the different spaces by either conforming to or resisting certain literacy practices. Children in my study also negotiated the social situation by resisting, conforming or adapting to certain literacy practices to suit themselves. For example, English was used as the dominant language of instruction and children were told to only use English at school. The children at the centres strategically negotiated the social situation by resisting and changing the dominant practice of only speaking English at school. They did this by making use of their home language in different spaces and in interactions with their peers.

I was specifically interested in the *how* of everyday life viz. *how* was literacy as a body of knowledge constructed, *how* did this construction shape literacy practices, *how* did certain knowledge become dominant whilst others were marginalised and what were the effects of this *how* on children, learning and teaching in early literacy classrooms. As I tried to uncover the ECD teachers' literacy practices that shaped what and how they did what they did within specific literacy events, I had to uncover their underlying discourses. These underlying discourses provided me with a lens to make sense of how certain knowledge became dominant, silenced or marginalised and the effects of these on children, teaching and learning at the centres. Furthermore, I was able to identify the different subjectivities that the different literacy engendered and the different subject positionings that the participants took up to make sense of what and how they did what they did. Theoretically and procedurally, I therefore moved from the literacy event to the literacy practice and finally to the discourse. The figure below provides a diagrammatic view of the theoretical and procedural moves I made to find the link between NLS and Foucault's discourse theory.

**Figure 2.1: Theoretical Link Between New Literacy Studies and Discourse**



This theoretical link helped me understand how literacy as a body of knowledge and power intersected. Both post-structural theories of language and literacy and NLS regard literacy as a socially situated practice rather than an autonomous skill with a single definition. To make visible literacy as social practice, Foucault's concept of discourse as illustrations of the power/knowledge matrix offered a link to research dominant and marginalised literacies and their power effects on the individuals at the early childhood centres (Foucault, 1980). This visibility enabled me to make sense of how the teachers' discourses of literacy were "themselves rooted in conceptions of knowledge, identity and being" and how the literate child was "discursively constructed within power/knowledge relations" (Street, 2003: 76; Walkerdine, 1993: 452).

In his genealogy (See Chapter 3, Section 3.5.1), Foucault (1980) looks at how discourse plays a role in the production and articulation of power. Foucault (1980) argues that discourses are social constructions that are considered regimes of truth because of their reference to some form of knowledge, located outside of human relations. Similarly, in NLS, emphasis is placed on how social history plays a role in the social and cultural reproduction of dominant literacies and literacy practices. As such, this study is my attempt to find a complementary link between NLS and Foucault's theory of discourse to research literacy as social practice in early childhood centres for 3-4 year old children. In the next section, I provide an outline of how the concept of discourse was used to create the nexus between discourse and literacy as a socially situated practice.

### **2.3 Discourse**

I used the concept of discourse as an overall analytical construct in my study. Foucault's (1972) work on discourse provides understandings of how subjects and subjectivities are constituted. His theory of discourse, discursive practices and discursive constructions/formations bring into effect multiple ways of being and enables different ways of thinking and speaking about different objects. To put it simply, a discourse is a group of statements, which provides language for speaking about something i.e. representing a particular kind of knowledge (Foucault, 1988). Many statements work together to produce a discursive formation/construction. Foucault (1988) argues that discourse itself is produced by practice – 'discursive practice' which involves the practice of producing meaning. Since all practices

involve meaning, it follows that all practices have a discursive aspect (Foucault, 1988). These concepts are elaborated on in the following section to reveal how the concepts were used in my study

I drew on Foucault's conception of discourse as outlined in his work in *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (1972) and *Politics and the Study of Discourse* (1991). For Foucault, discourse is the "general domain of all statements and sometimes as a regulated practice that accounts for a number of statements" (Foucault, 1972: 80). Discourse can be viewed as any connected group of statements in a linguistic form that can be written, spoken or represented in some kind of symbolic form. These statements as a component of discourse are interrelated with systems of knowledge and which can be seen as effects of particular relations of power, which work together to form a discursive formation/construction. McHoul and Grace (1993) explain that statements can be understood as "functional units... They do things; bring about effects" (1997: 37). Discourse involves certain "conditions that enable people, according to true and false statements" to be constituted as subject or object (Florence, 1994: 462). Subjects and objects are produced through discourse with the subject taking an active role in shaping the discourse.

To "bring about effects" statements encompass a "certain domain of the object; presents certain manners and styles of articulation; rests on a certain number of concepts and develops a certain theme" (Foucault, 1988: 37; 1972:46). Foucault (1972) maintains that one should not reduce the concept of discourse to simple linguistic elements and signs but rather, it should focus on the practices in which discourse structures and produces domains of knowledge. He emphasises that what discourses "do is more than use these signs to designate things. It is this *more* that renders them irreducible to language (*langue*) and to speech. It is this '*more*' that we must reveal and describe" (Foucault, 1972:49). Consequently, in this study, I needed to pay particular attention to the constitutive nature of discourses; how they worked together to constitute literacy, learning, teaching and children at the early childhood centres of my study.

Foucault (1971) claimed that in any discourse there are rules of formation for objects, concepts and theories. For example, in his inaugural lecture, *Orders of discourse* (Foucault, 1971), he described how the discourse around 'madness' as a

medical category came into being. Foucault (1971) was able to show the ways in which the medical discourse of 'madness' emerged with related ways of speaking about individual pathology. These rules of formation, constructed boundaries that delimited and brought into existence rules for what was considered normal as well as expectations of what was considered 'normal' (Foucault, 1971). Foucault's (1972; 1991) theories of discourse and the associated discursive practices allow for multiple ways of being, which allows for different ways of thinking and speaking about literacy as a social practice. Researching the early childhood teachers' discourses of literacy was a useful tool for my study as it is in the "production, accumulation, circulation and functioning of a discourse [where] power and knowledge are joined together" (Foucault, 1980:100).

Foucault (1972) says that discourses contain complexities and uncertainties and that at any given moment in time, there are multiple discourses at work. To understand how discourses "constitute the objects of which they speak" I needed to understand the ways in which the early childhood teachers' discourses of literacy connected, competed and collided to constitute the literate subject (Foucault, 1972: 49). In talking about discourses, I refer to concepts and thoughts about literacy, learning, teaching and children, spoken and written texts, literacy practices, classroom routines, the organisation of time, space and so on. Specifically, I refer to how "a group of particular relations" makes it possible for the literacy, learning, teaching and children to become "manifest, nameable and describable" (Ibid, 1972: 47). These understandings "give rise to certain organisations of concepts, certain types of enunciations and certain formation of theoretical choices" within a particular discursive practice (Foucault, 1972:41).

Foucault's concept of discourse shifted over time. These shifts relate to *how* discourses constitute/construct the subject. Caldwell (2007: 771-772) argues: "Is the subject simply an effect of discourse or does the exclusion of the subject from discourse disclose the constitutive possibilities of agency?" In Foucault's (1972) archaeology, discourses were defined as "primarily structured, grouped and regulated by systems of rules which state who can say what, where and how" (Caldwell, 2007: 772). Discourses thus work to identify the conditions that make it possible for certain types of subjectivities to become manifest. These conditions also include the hidden conditions or rules that the subjects take up to bring

themselves into being/effect. For example, Luke's (1992) study of early literacy training in Grade 1 Australian classrooms, shows how literacy training was aimed at teaching children how to encode and decode texts in accordance with the cultural beliefs of what it meant to be literate. These beliefs centred on bodily discipline and an internalisation of authority, which can be construed as self-surveillance or 'self-colonisation' (Luke, 1992:121). Within the context of my study, a literate child's subjectivity was produced through teachers' discourses of what it meant to be literate. These discourses informed their practices as the teachers had constructed a literate child as one who needed to be 'school ready'. Under these discursive conditions, the teachers ensured that children acquired certain literacy knowledge and skills that would make them school ready. Some of these included pre-literacy and pre-numeracy skills, development of fine and gross motor skills etc., which were considered important for the development of the school ready child. These discursive practices were thus legitimated within the discourse of school readiness.

In his genealogy, Foucault (1972) expanded on discourse to include the notion of agency. Foucault's (1972: 49) genealogical work identified discourses as the "practices, which form the objects of which they speak". In his work, *Politics and the study of discourse* (Foucault, 1991: 59), he sees discourse as "the sets of rules which at a given period and for a given society define: the limits and forms of the *sayable*. What is it possible to speak of?" In relation to my study, the regulatory nature of discourse allows for what is sayable in relation to what constitutes literacy, learning, literacy practices and the literate child. Significant to this, is the concept of agency where the subject/early childhood teacher has the capacity to make choices about what is sayable or not in relation to literacy, learning, teaching and the literate child.

The concept of agency reveals the circulatory nature of discourses. It shows how discourses have the potential not only to act on the early childhood teachers in my study, but also shows how the teachers make choices about the discourses that they will take up in the construction of the literate child. Foucault contends that a focus on agency does not suggest that the subject/teacher is always in control of the discourses that work to constitute what she does in her everyday literacy practices. Depending on the "conditions of existence" discourse constitutes the subject in different times and in different ways (Foucault, 1972: 38). For example, discourses

of the becoming child, English as hegemony, literacy as skill etc. may act on and are enacted by the early childhood teachers as they are positioned by and through the interconnection of these discourses. It is in the interconnection of discourses that the literate subject/child is constituted.

For Foucault (1972) discourses are interrelated and it is in this interrelationship that discourses work to produce subjectivities. He maintains that this relationship needs to be analysed as “there is nothing to be gained from describing this autonomous layer of discourses unless one can relate it to other layers, practices, institutions, social relations, political relations and so on” (Foucault, 1972:162). Understanding how the intersection of different discourses operates to constitute discursive practices is significant in understanding how the literate child is constructed. In relation to my study, discursive practices are contextually situated and specific to the early childhood cultural settings as they make possible the emergence of particular objects viz. literacy, learning, teaching and children by giving it the “status of an object” (Foucault, 1972: 41). Therefore, this warrants a reflection on how discourses have worked to produce the early childhood teachers’ work in relation to the associated “layers, practices, institutions, social relations, political relations and so on” hence, the emergence of the literate subject/child (Ibid, 1972: 162).

There are certain discourses that become dominant, create forces that become common sense understandings and thus taken for granted regimes of truth (Foucault, 1977). Burman (2008), Cannella (1997; 2010) and Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery and Taubman (2000) show how education has been constructed by the scientific discourses of psychology and the medical sciences. Cannella (1997:37) argues that “a discourse of education has emerged that legitimises the belief of what children are like, what we can expect from them at different ages and stages of their growth and development and how we should differentiate our treatment of them in educational settings”. Consequently, these dominant discourses bring particular literacy practices, literacy actions and literate subjects into being. For example, child development discourses and school readiness have created common sense understandings or regimes of truth of how children develop and become literate (Foucault, 1977). These common sense understandings create particular constructions of literacy, children, their learning and the role of the early childhood teacher in the construction of a literate child. In my study, I explored dominant

discourses of early childhood teachers' talk and their discursive practices to reveal how the literate subject was constructed. In the next section, I explore how dominant discourses create the spaces where different types of power and knowledge intersect.

## **2.4 Regimes of truth**

For Foucault (1980), dominant discourses override other possibilities through a set of discursive rules that govern what can be said, done and thought. Dominant discourses “induce effects of power” (Foucault, 1980:131), so that dominant ways of thinking and being work to constitute ways of speaking and being an early literacy teacher. The truth is relative to the time and space in which it is produced. Foucault (1980:131) maintains that as a “thing of this world”, the truth is unique to the discursive constructions that enable it to be produced. So-called truths are constructed through historically specific mechanisms that produce discourses to “function as true in particular times and places” (O’Farrell, n.d.). As Foucault (1980: 131-132) argues:

Truth is linked in a circular relation with systems of power, which produces and sustains it, and to effect of power, which it induces and which extend it.

For Foucault (1980: 109), regimes of truth refer to rules that govern what is said and how it is said. Power/knowledge discourses produce truth/s and the “rules delimit the sayable” (Henriques, Holloway, Urwin, Venn & Walkerdine, 1984: 105). They work to regulate practice and constitute subjectivities. These regimes of truth govern what is sayable/unsayable or permissible/no permissible and allow/disallow certain subjectivities.

Discourses produces rules and truths and these become part of our everyday way of speaking as though they have always been there. When discourses gain this impetus, they produce truths that become irrefutable and taken for granted. Walkerdine (1993: 454) maintains that these truths are “something real produced out of fiction”. For example, Moss (2005: 406) argues that the notion of quality is “part of a regime of truth or dominant discourse” which shifts depending on the discursive rules in different times and in different spaces. The regimes of truth of quality shapes the subjectivity of the early literacy teacher and a literate child. This regime of truth has the effect of limiting and constraining what is sayable and silence and exclude

“alternative ways of understanding and speaking about the world” (Moss, 2005: 406). These silences create exclusions and marginalisations whilst the dominant discourses remain unchallenged. In essence, these dominant ways of thinking become normalised and standardised. An example is the discourse of maternalism, which surrounds early childhood education. It becomes impossible not to think of an early childhood teacher as one who is nurturing, caring, loving and compassionate.

## **2.5 Power/Knowledge**

Foucault wrote at length about historical reconfigurations of knowledge in what is now known as the human sciences. In *Discipline and Punish* (1977) and in the first volume of *The History of Sexuality* (1978), he argued that these formations of knowledge were also linked to different forms of power and domination. In this sense, power and knowledge can be understood as dynamic and circulatory. In his writings he often combined the concept of power and knowledge into a single word, ‘power/knowledge’ (*pouvoir/savoir*).

Feder (2011: 55) maintains that Foucault explicitly introduces the “composite terms power/knowledge in his middle genealogical period of his work”. However, the concept of power/knowledge encompasses the entire corpus starting with Foucault’s archaeological works, through to his genealogy and his later work on the aesthetic/ethical self (Ibid, 2011). Foucault (1980: 83) believed that archaeology is primarily concerned with an “analysis of the discursive formations”, while genealogy is focused on the “historical struggles that occur among and between knowledges, discourses and practice”. Gutting (1994: 14) contends that “archaeology is primarily about the history of concepts or ideas” e.g. madness, literacy and children. On the other hand, “genealogies are histories of the present” viz. histories of institutions and practices which examine how things came to be the way that they are by” tracing the origins of practices”.

For Foucault (1977: 27):

power and knowledge directly imply one another; that there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations.

By this he means that power is everywhere, diffused and embodied in discourse, knowledge and regimes of truth.

For Foucault (2000b), power is not a commodity or substance or located in one space or source. Instead it involves “a certain type of relation between individuals” (Foucault, 2000b: 324). While these relations might combine with relations of exchange, production and communication, they are also specific to the workings of power (Ibid, 2000b). It follows that “while the human subject is placed in relations of production and of signification, he is equally placed in power relations that are very complex” (Foucault, 2000b: 324). Foucault (1980) did not offer a theory of power. Instead he offered “analytics of relations of power”, which shows how power is exercised (Foucault, 1980: 223).

For Foucault (1980), power works to [re]construct discourse; it is both a discourse and located within discourses. Foucault understood discourse to be the space where power and knowledge intersect (1990). It is in this intersection that different types of power produce different types of knowledge that become regimes of truth (Foucault, 1977). How knowledge is constituted through the connection of discursive practices was significant for my study, as certain discourses are “those points where it becomes capillary” and spreads out into other spaces (Foucault, 1980:98). The “points where it becomes capillary” is made possible because of the dynamic relationship between power/knowledge (1980: 98). For example, in my study, dominant discourses of child development and school readiness produced particular ways of thinking about literacy, children, teaching and learning. These discourses became powerful in that they connected and aligned to construct a literate child at the centres.

For Foucault power involves the strategy, multiple relations or techniques that individuals invest in or transmit. In his later work, he sees power as being both productive and repressive (Foucault, 1980). Power works as a mechanism that orders and controls subjects but the subject is also subjected to mechanisms of order and control. Thus he argues:

We must cease once and for all to describe the effects of power in negative terms: it ‘excludes’, it ‘represses’, it ‘censors’, it ‘abstracts’, it masks’, it

'conceals'. In fact power produces; it produces reality; it produces domains of objects and rituals of truth (1977: 194).

In my study, the context for early literacy teaching and learning called for a school ready child. The teachers were thus governed by power controls and mechanisms from within the institutional context, which colluded to produce a school ready, literate child. Through different kinds of discursive practices, the teachers in turn governed, regulated and inscribed children's bodies/minds with particular "ways of speaking, acting and being" to ensure the construction of this school ready, literate child (Luke, 1992: 121).

Foucault believed that one should study power as starting from a micro-level as power works *through* culture and customs, institutions and individuals (Feder, 2011). Foucault (1988) expands on Heidegger's (1977) work on the way in which modern technology influences the kind of subject that is produced and identifies four interconnected technologies:

- Technologies of production, which permit individuals to produce, transform or manipulate things.
- Technologies of sign systems, which permit individuals to use signs, meanings, symbols or signification.
- Technologies of power/domination, which determine the conduct of individuals, subjecting them to certain ends or domination.
- Technologies of the self which permit individuals to affect by their own means or with the help of others a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct and ways of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection or immortality... (Foucault, 1988: 18).

These technologies seldom work separately and each technology involves some form of domination. Each technology implies some mode of training and modification of individuals in terms of their specific nature and their constant interaction (Foucault, 1988). This training or modification occurs through three means: hierarchical observation, normalising judgements and the examination. This will be discussed in greater detail in Section 2.6.

Foucault's (1980) theory of power encompasses power/domination, power/resistance and power/knowledge. In the data analysis chapters, I show how Foucault's theory of power operated to construct the school ready literate child (Chapters 4, 5 and 6). For Foucault (1980: 98), power produces individuals and reality as "individuals are the vehicles of power" and they operate through power. The technologies of power which are intended to regulate and control can often lead to resistance. As he asserts, "if I feel the truth about myself, it is in part that I am constituted as a subject across a number of power relations which are exercised over me and which I exercise over others" (Foucault, 1988: 39). This resistance can lead to liberation and transformation. Dreyfuss and Rabinow (1982: 147) provide an explanation of the nexus between power and resistance:

Power needs resistance as one of its fundamental condition of operation. It is through the articulation of points of resistance that power spreads through the social field. But it is also; of course through resistance that power is disrupted. Resistance is both an element of the functioning of power and a source of its perpetual disorder.

As discussed in the beginning of this section, Foucault (1980) states that power is closely related to knowledge. In *Discipline and Punish* (1977) he shows how the asylums, prisons and schools provide spaces where power can be employed to observe and accumulate knowledge about the individuals. It follows that the spaces where power is employed are also the spaces where knowledge is produced. The disciplines reorganised institutions like schools, hospitals and prisons into organisations and reinforced the cyclical relationship between power and knowledge (Foucault, 1977: 27-28). This resulted in different branches of knowledge like "the subject who knows; the objects to be known and the modalities of knowledge" (Ibid, 1977:28).

Child development discourse and school readiness discourse (See Section 4.4.1 and 4.4.2) are two examples of how power/knowledge operated in my study. These scientific discourses are considered the "ultimate form of rational thought" (O'Farrel, n.d.) and valued as a 'truth'. Thus child development and school readiness are discourses that have a power/knowledge relationship. As a 'science', child development and school readiness have set itself up as an "ultimate form of rational

thought” (Ibid, n.d.). These discourses consist of “constructs and concepts that have been subjected to rigorous criteria of scientificity” (O’Farrel, n.d.) as they consist of thoughts and ideas, strategies, techniques and procedures that are practical and operable. It therefore becomes difficult to refute the discourses of child development and school readiness, as rational thought and logic underpins these discourses.

Foucault (1977: 184-185) claims that the “relationship between power/knowledge is an example of “the subjection of those who are perceived as objects and the objectification of those who are subjected”...for in this slender technique are to be found a whole domain of knowledge, a whole type of power”. This dynamic relationship between power and knowledge involves techniques/technologies of power that produce knowledge. In early childhood education, knowledge about how children learn, ‘effective’ pedagogical practices, what a literate child should be able to do etc. are examples of discourses that permeate early childhood education and care. The child is thus constructed as an object of scientific knowledge and analysis. This knowledge is then used to train and correct the literate body/mind. The knowledge that is generated about literacy, learning and teaching then becomes a means for justification and forms the basis for technologies of power. For example, the early childhood teachers in my study believed that children had to develop certain literacy skills like perceptual, fine and gross motor skills before he/she was considered school ready. These beliefs were based on the discourses of child development and developmentally appropriate practices.

In the intersection between power and knowledge, the techniques of power used, also give rise to and depend on the constitution of knowledge that the teachers have about literacy practices, teaching, learning and children. Knowledge is thus important in the construction of the literate child. It is through knowledge that a literate child can be nameable and describable as it brings the child into a space where her/his limits, potentials and characteristics can be identified in an orderly way (Foucault, 1977). Naming and describing a literate child provides information that enables comparison, evaluation and judgements to be made.

The intersection between power/knowledge draws attention to the discourses that collude, collide and entangle individuals as “subjects of disciplines and in so doing,

recursively form subjectivities and practices” (Power, 2011:43). Foucault’s concept of power/knowledge and how it works to [re]construct discourses had significance for my study. The concept of disciplinary power, afforded me opportunities to understand how the discourses of early childhood teachers influenced their practices hence, the construction of the literate child. By looking at issues of power relations, disciplinary techniques, the production of knowledge and resistance to power, I was able to make sense of what teachers do and how they do what they do through the teaching and learning opportunities afforded to young children at the early childhood centres.

In the following section, I outline *how* disciplinary power works and *what* it produces in early childhood centres for 3-4 year old children. I use disciplinary techniques of time and space to show how disciplinary power works by distributing children into different spaces, controlling the activities for learning, organising geneses and composing forces so as to make the body/mind “more obedient as it becomes more useful” (Foucault, 1977: 138). As argued by Hoffman (2011; 30) different techniques of disciplinary power work to control the body/mind by producing not only “an individual but also *individuality* consisting of cellular, organic, genetic and combinatory traits”.

## **2.6 Disciplinary techniques: Time and space**

Foucault’s work in *Discipline and Punish* (1977) was used to examine how the disciplinary nature of early literacy pedagogic practices was integrated into daily classroom routines. Foucault’s work in *Discipline and Punish* (1977) traces the change in penal practices, from one of physical punishment and spectacle to one where the body and mind become subject to control and regulation. Discipline is then a technique of power that “provides procedures for training or coercing bodies (individual and collective” (Smart, 2002: 85) and minds. Therefore, the Foucauldian connection between discipline and the body/mind became the theoretical lens through which the data was read. Consequently, the intersecting themes of time and space as a disciplinary technique provided a means for analysing classroom literacy practices. This enabled me to understand how time and space were used as disciplinary techniques to regulate the body/mind of an ideal literate child. Foucault (1977:136) says that “the classical age discovered the body as object and target of

power” where the body was “manipulated, shaped, trained, which obeys, responds, becomes skilful and increases its forces”.

During the 18<sup>th</sup> century, a greater importance was placed on the techniques that were used to create a docile body. The first technique was the *scale of control* where the body was targeted at an individual level –“movements, gestures, attitudes, rapidity: an infinitesimal power over the active body” (Foucault, 1977: 137). The second technique is the *object of control* where the emphasis was placed on “efficiency of movements, their internal organisation...through exercise” (Ibid, 1977: 137). Lastly, *modality* implies an “uninterrupted, constant coercion, supervising the processes of the activity rather than its result and is exercised according to a codification that partitions as closely as possible time, space, movements” (Foucault, 1977:137). These techniques created a relation of “docility-utility” which Foucault called ‘disciplines’. Disciplines became the ‘general formulas of domination” as the “art of human body was born”, which was directed at increasing its “growth of its skills...intensification of subjection” thereby making the child more obedient and docile (Ibid, 1977:137-138).

To create a subjected and practised docile body, discipline functions as a “machinery of power” that serves as both a ‘political anatomy” and as a “mechanics of power” (Foucault, 1977: 138). Discipline therefore defines the “hold that one may have over the bodies of others, so that they may operate as one wishes, with the techniques, the speed and the efficiency that one determines” (Foucault, 1977:138). In doing this, discipline dissociates power from the body by increasing its capacity and turns the body into a relation of strict subjection (Ibid, 1977). As a disciplining institution, the early childhood centre creates a subjected and practised docile body through the temporal and spatial regulation of the child’s body/mind through everyday literacy pedagogical practices. Foucault (1977) outlines four methods through which discipline operates to create a subjected and practised docile body. These include the art of distribution, the control of activity, organisational genesis and the composition of forces. These methods are crucial to understanding how the spatial and temporal regulation of children’s bodies and minds are used as key disciplinary techniques in concrete literacy pedagogic practices (See Chapter 5).

### 2.6.1 The art of distributions

Fundamental to this study is how discourses and its associated discursive practices construct the literate subject and how children are disciplined to become literate subjects. Foucault (1977: 141) maintains, “discipline proceeds from the distributions of individuals in space”. Disciplinary power thus creates a cellular form of individuality by ordering individuals in space (Hoffman, 2011). Foucault called this ordering the art of distributions. The art of distributions produces this individuality by firstly enclosing individuals in spaces that are different from other spaces by means of gates or walls (Foucault, 1977: 141-143). Moreover, these spaces are partitioned into individual cells to ensure “docility and utility of bodies” (Ibid, 1977: 143). In addition, these spaces have specific functions to ensure effective use (Foucault, 1977). Lastly, the art of distributions creates a cellular individuality by ascribing the unit of rank to individuals (ibid, 1977: 145-149).

*Enclosure* refers to the “specification of a place heterogeneous to all others and closed in upon itself ...to create a “protected space of disciplinary monotony” (Foucault, 1977:141). Schools, factories and army barracks are examples of “protected space[s] of disciplinary monotony” (Ibid, 1977: 141). As an enclosed space, the early childhood centre can be seen to be a space that limits disturbances and inconveniences by concentrating children in protected spaces removed from the wider community so that their progress and learning can be easily monitored. However, enclosure is neither “constant, nor indispensable, nor sufficient in its disciplinary machinery” (Foucault, 1977:143). It requires the technique of *partitioning* to control space in a more detailed and flexible way where individuals are allocated their own place and spaces. Partitioning thus aims to:

eliminate the effects of their imprecise distributions...to establish presences and absences, to know where and how to locate individuals, to set up useful communications...to be able to supervise the conduct of each individual, to assess it, to e it, to calculate its qualities and merits (Foucault, 1977: 143).

In this way, discipline organises an “analytical space” by determining procedures aimed at “knowing, mastering and using” (Ibid, 1977:143). For example, in my study, children were separated according to age and allocated specific spaces for learning to ensure “knowing, mastering and using” (Foucault, 1977:143).

The rule of *functional sites* allows for spaces to be used in different ways. Some spaces are used not only for supervision or to break down dangerous communications, but are also useful spaces. Foucault (1977) provides the example of the factory to show how bodies and machinery are distributed in different ways to enhance productivity and enable supervision. The labour process was divided into stages and individuals were assigned particular activities to enhance productivity. Work could be observed, assessed and related to the individual who carried out the work. In early childhood classrooms, the carpeted area, children's tables, indoor and outdoor spaces are functional sites that not only aid in literacy learning but are also spaces that involve specific behavioural norms. Children are thus subjected to certain bodily constraints that the functional space itself, imposes on them. Discipline thus becomes connected to rank.

*Rank* refers to how individual bodies are allocated a space in a system of classification. Ranking allows for individual bodies to be allocated a "location that does not give them a fixed position but distributes them and circulates them in a network of relations" (Foucault, 1977: 146). Foucault (1977: 146-147) provides an example of how pupils are ranked in rows in classrooms and other spaces in schools, ranks are attributed to each child after the completion of an activity or examination - weekly, monthly and yearly performances are also ranked. Children spend their time in school being ranked on the basis of their age, performance and behaviour. Foucault (1977: 147) argues that elementary school created the means for serial space to be organised "by assigning individual places it made possible the supervision of each individual and the simultaneous work of all".

The early childhood centres in my study can not only be regarded as an educational space that functions like a learning machine, but also as a space where supervision, hierarchising and rewarding take place. "In organising 'cells', 'places' and 'ranks', the disciplines create complex spaces that are at once architectural, functional and hierarchical in nature" (Foucault, 1977:148). The spaces are real or ideal, "real because they govern the disposition of buildings, rooms, furniture, but also ideal because they are projected over this arrangement of characterisations, assessments, hierarchies" (Ibid, 1977:148). For example in my study, the indoor/outdoor spaces, the carpeted area, the toilet etc. allowed for positions, movements and circulations of children and teachers. These different spaces also

guaranteed the obedience and docility of individuals and the economic use of time and space (Foucault, 1977). As a base for the microphysics of 'cellular' power, children were classified, ranked and ordered within these spaces, which ensured that the teachers had control over the bodies of the children. See Chapter 5 for examples of how the classroom space was organised to bring the literate child into effect. In the next section, I provide a description of how the control of activity is used as a disciplinary technique in the construction of the literate body/mind.

### **2.6.2 The control of activity**

One of the ways in which the disciplinary power operates is through the temporal control of activity. This comprises of five mechanisms: *the timetable*, *the temporal elaboration of the act*, *correlation of the body and gesture*, *the body-object articulation* and *exhaustive use*.

As a "general framework for an activity", the *timetable* "establish[es] rhythms, impose particular occupations and regulate the cycles of repetition" (Foucault, 1997:155; 149). The disciplines temporally regulate rhythms, occupation and repetition of activities by breaking down time into quarter hours, minutes and seconds. Within the context of the early childhood centre, different activities were broken down into minutes and hours. In addition, constant supervision meant that time was meaningfully spent to ensure the "elimination of any disturbances and distractions" (Foucault, 1977: 150). Precision and application were applied with regularity to guarantee that time was meaningfully utilised by eliminating any defects and stimulating the constant application of the body to activity.

While the timetable as a general framework for activity is imposed from the outside, the *temporal elaboration of the act* comes into play where the "anatomo-chronological schema is defined" (Foucault, 1977: 152). It is in the temporal elaboration of the act that time penetrates the body and with it all the mechanisms of power comes into being. The "act is broken down into elements; the position of the body, limbs, articulations is defined...movement[s] are assigned direction, an aptitude, a duration; their order of succession is prescribed" (Ibid, 1977:152). Through this the *correlation of the body and gesture* is enhanced.

Foucault (1977) argues that disciplinary control does not just consist of simply teaching or imposing a series of particular gestures; it imposes a relation between

the overall position of the body and a gesture – *a correlation of the body and gesture*. Disciplinary control is about speed and efficiency and requires the efficient correlation of the overall body position and the associated gesture. Together with a correlation of the body and gesture, disciplinary control also requires a combination of the *body-object articulation* where “each of the relations that the body must have with the object that it manipulates” is articulated (Foucault, 1977:152-153). It consists of the parts of the body that must be used and the parts of the objects that must be manipulated to carry out the activity. For example, the parts of the body that needs to be used in the writing process (elbow, fingers, position of the legs) work together with the way in which the writing object is manipulated and used (e.g. up down movements, left-right movements). The body-object is then correlated according to the number and series of successive gestures – number of up down movements, left to right movements etc. Power is introduced when the “surface of contact between the body and the object it handles” comes into play, constituting a “body-weapon, body-tool body-machine complex” (Foucault, 1977:153). Disciplinary power serves as a function of synthesis as it is the “coercive link with the apparatus of production” (Ibid, 1977:153).

The last mechanism in the control of activity is that of *exhaustive use*. “Discipline...imposes the principle of a theoretically ever-growing use of time: exhaustion rather than use; it is a question of extracting, from time ever more available moments, and from each moment, ever more useful forces” (Foucault, 1977: 154). Foucault provides the example of how the school tries to improve their efficiency. Schools improve efficiency by dividing children into groups, assigning monitors and assistants to groups of children so that activities can be completed timeously. Signals, whistles and orders become the temporal norms through which learning is accelerated and the importance of speed as a virtue is taught. Foucault quotes Bernard (1816) by saying that the aim of signals, whistles and orders is “to accustom the children in executing well and quickly the same operations, to diminish as far as possible by speed the loss of time caused by moving from one operation to the other” (Foucault, 1977: 154). This ‘technique of subjection’ allows a new object to be formed – “susceptible to specified operations, which have their orders, their stages, their internal conditions, their constituent elements” (Ibid, 1977:155). In

becoming the target of power, the body is subjected to new forms of knowledge and one that can be usefully trained and subjected to regulation and authority.

At this juncture, I need to make a point about the dualistic separation of time and space and the privileging of space over time (See Soja, 1996; Foucault, 2000a; Lefebvre, 1991; May & Thrift, 2003; Dixon, 2010). Researchers have argued that the dualistic separation of time and space or the privileging of space over time results in time and space being analysed separately (See Soja, 1996; Foucault, 2000a; Lefebvre, 1991; May & Thrift, 2003 and Dixon, 2010). I take note that time and space is inextricably bound together in the constitution of society and people (Dixon, 2010). With this in mind, I have chosen to analyse time and space separately without privileging space over time, or to create binaries between time and space. Rather, the elements of the control of activity and the art of distribution as outlined in *Discipline and Punish* (1977) provided a useful lens for the analysis of daily classroom literacy routines, discursive practices and movements in time and space. My rationale was based on creating an understanding of how discourses and discursive practices operate on the child's body/mind thereby constructing/constituting the literate child. The teachers' literacy discourses and discursive practices around overlapping themes of space and time, as key disciplinary techniques, provided a link to understanding how children were governed to become literate. It also enabled me to understand how teachers organised time and space in particular ways for different kinds of children. In the following section, I discuss how the disciplines organised and regulated individual existence through the regulation of time, bodies, forces and activities in its endeavour to construct a literate child.

### **2.6.3 Organisational geneses**

The disciplines organise time and space by focusing on regulating "time, bodies, forces and activities" (Foucault, 1977: 157). This is done in four ways: duration, training, examination and a series of series (Ibid, 1977: 157-162). *Duration* refers to a division of time into successive or parallel segments, which has a beginning, and an ending time. *Training* periods have a specific duration; involves particular aspects and increases in complexity (Foucault, 1977). The training period concludes with an *examination* which serves a triple function – "showing whether the subject has reached the level required; of guaranteeing that each subject undergoes the

same apprenticeship and of differentiating the ability of each individual” (Foucault, 1977: 158). Finally, a *series of series* is drawn up where appropriate activities are assigned to the individual according to his/her level, his/her rank and exercises that are suited to him/her. At the end of each series another set of series begins. Each individual is thus “caught up in a temporal series which specifically defines his level or his rank” (Ibid, 1977:159). Foucault (1977: 159) explains that disciplinary time was imposed on pedagogical practice by:

Specialising the time of training and detaching it from adult time, from the time of mastery, arranging different stages, separated from one another by graded examinations; drawing up programmes, each of which must take place during a particular stage and which involves exercises of increasing difficulty; qualifying individuals according to the way in which they progress through the series.

In this way a “whole analytical pedagogy was formed which breaks down the subject being taught into its simplest elements, it hierarchised each stage of development into small steps” (Ibid, 1977: 159). Thus, a technical model of learning was created. This seriation of successive activities reveals how time and power are connected. The seriation of successive activities allows for the:

control and regular intervention (through differentiation, correction, punishment, elimination) in each moment in time...characterising individuals as they move through the series...resulting in a totalised use of time and activity which is the ultimate capacity of an individual (Foucault, 1977: 160).

The above are examples of disciplinary methods that are linear in time and integrated and orientated towards an ending point - “evolutive time” (Ibid, 1977:160). Foucault (1977: 160) maintains that time is also social and must be viewed in terms of progress. “The disciplinary techniques reveal individual series: the discovery of an evolution in terms of ‘genesis’”. Exercise is fundamental to this seriation of time as it imposes repetitive tasks on the body and allows for grading and ranking of individuals (Ibid, 1977:161). For example, an educational programme in an early literacy classroom contains specific activities, which are developmentally appropriate and based on child development discourse. Activities are broken down into elements of increasing complexity; children are assessed, ranked and classified as

knowing/not knowing as they progress through the series on the road to becoming school ready. In the next section I show how the disciplines make use of different forces to construct the school ready, literate child.

#### **2.6.4 The composition of forces**

Discipline includes the “art of distributing bodies, of extracting time from them and accumulating it” and “composing forces in order to obtain an efficient machine” (Foucault, 1977: 164). This occurs when “individual bodies become an element that may be placed, moved, articulated on others” (Ibid, 1977:164). To become an efficient machine, the body needs to know the place it occupies, the space it covers, the regularity and the order in which it needs to operate its movements. The body is thus “constituted as part of a multi-segmentary machine” (Foucault, 1977: 164). This body/machine is disciplined through a *chronological series of time* where time is adjusted to the time of others in such a way that the “maximum amount of forces combined with optimum results can be achieved” (Ibid, 1977:147). Foucault (1977:165) talks about how the school operates as a machine for learning, where “each pupil, each level and each moment” is used in the process of teaching. This combination of forces requires a *system of commands*, which are techniques of training that trigger the required behaviour in the disciplined body/mind. For example, in early childhood centres, signals such as bells, clapping of hands, gestures or a certain kind of look contains within it a “system of command and the morality of obedience” (Ibid, 1977:165).

Discipline thus creates a body that is endowed with four characteristics: it is cellular by the distribution of bodies in space, it is organic through the coding of activities, it is genetic by means of the accumulation of time and it is combinatory by the composition of forces (Foucault, 1977). In early childhood centres, timetables are drawn up, movements are prescribed, certain training or exercises are imposed on the body/mind and tactics such as training and prescribing movements are used to ensure the combination of forces. Foucault (1977: 170) goes on further to analyse how power “gets going and keeps going” and he ascribes the success of power to several techniques: hierarchical observation, normalising judgements and the examination. Section 2.6 provides an analysis of these techniques of disciplinary power.

## 2.7 Disciplinary power as technologies of literacy training

For Foucault (1977: 170) the main function of “disciplinary power is to ‘train’...discipline makes individuals; it is the specific techniques of a power that regards individuals as both objects and as instruments of its exercise”. Disciplinary power brings the effects of power to “its capillary form of existence, the point where power reaches into the very grain of individuals, touches their bodies and inserts into their actions and attitudes, their discourse, learning processes and everyday lives” (Foucault, 1980: 39). Through disciplinary techniques in its dynamic relation to knowledge, a young child’s literacy learning and development are made visible, describable, and quantifiable and consequently, subject to intervention.

Foucault (1977: 170) identifies three disciplinary mechanisms through which disciplinary power operates: *hierarchical observation*, *normalising judgement* and *examination*. Disciplinary power situates individuals in spaces where on-going observation and surveillance give them visibility. Foucault (1977) provides an example of how the architecture of the school allows for observation and surveillance thus subjecting children to compulsory visibility. For example, the ways in which classrooms are, within the early childhood centre, the arrangement of children’s tables and the way in which the toilets are designed with half-doors so that children are subjected to constant visibility. These mechanisms of observation and surveillance allow for the “progressive objectification and the ever more subtle partitioning of individual behaviour” (Foucault, 1977: 173).

In the early childhood centres, the teachers and helpers subject children to constant observation as a means of determining and ensuring their optimal learning and development. Knowing what and how children are learning are important teaching skills as these guide and inform practice. In the early childhood centres of my study, observation and surveillance formed part of everyday literacy practices during teacher-directed and child-initiated activities. Foucault (1977: 176) maintains, “a relation of surveillance...is inscribed at the heart of the practice of teaching, not as an additional or adjacent part, but as a mechanism that is inherent to it and which increases its efficiency”.

Disciplinary techniques of observation and surveillance allow for “a penalty of the norm” to be brought into effect as it “compares, differentiates, hierarchizes, homogenizes, excludes” (Foucault, 1977: 183). Individuals are compared and

differentiated from one another by a number of general categories and then compared to a norm that is set against a corpus of laws and texts" (Ibid, 1977:183). *Normalising judgements* thus becomes a technique of disciplinary power "indicating membership of a homogenous social body but also plays a part in classification, hierarchization and the distribution of rank" (Foucault, 1977:184). While the power of normalisation ensures homogeneity, it also individualises by allowing for gaps to be measured; levels to be determined; specialties to be fixed and difference to be identified so that individuals can be fitted into the norm (Ibid, 1977). For example in my study, children's learning was standardised against the norm of child development and school readiness. Observation and surveillance allowed for children to be compared, differentiated and fixed according to this norm.

For Foucault (1977: 184) the *examination* allows for the combination of the techniques of "observation and normalising judgement" to come into play. "It is a normalising gaze, a surveillance that makes it possible to qualify, to classify" thereby, giving visibility through which one can differentiate and e young children (Ibid, 1977:184). The examination thus allows for the subjection of objects to become manifested/visible and for the objectification of those who are subjected by its procedures and arranging of the objects against a given norm (1977: 184-185).

For example, in my study, children's learning was observed, judged and information about their learning was documented. These documents, which included children's books (in the case of Universal ECC) and report cards constituted the child as a "describable, analysable object...in order to maintain him in his individual features, in his particular evolution, in his own aptitudes and abilities, under the gaze of a permanent corpus of knowledge" (Foucault, 1988:190). At the end of each quarter, report cards were sent out to parents where the child's performance was measured against overall expected criteria together with "the calculation of gaps" (Ibid, 1988: 190). These report cards served as on-going surveillance mechanisms as the both the teachers and the children were subjected to hierarchical observation (See Appendix 2 for an example of a report card). The teachers subjected the child to observation and assessment and the teachers themselves were subjected to surveillance by the principals at the centres. The act of documentation and reporting allowed for self-observation as well as a means of observing and normalising children's literacy learning. In the following section, I discuss Foucault's theory of

power and technologies of the self to analyse subjectivity and subject positioning. The intention is to make sense of how different modes of power influence subject formation and subjectivities of the early childhood teachers and the literate child.

## 2.8 Subjectivity

Foucault's (1984) theory of how individuals are constituted is significant to understand how the early childhood teachers constitute themselves and the young children in their classrooms. Foucault's work on knowledge, power and the subject was strongly influenced by his readings of Nietzsche (Foucault, 1984) and Heidegger (1977). His ideas around subjectivity shifted over the years and these were related to how individuals perceive themselves. The changes in the use of the concepts of power and the subject can be divided into three phases: archaeological, genealogical and aesthetic/ethical (Välikangas & Seeck, 2011; Allen, 2002; Starkey & Hatchuel, 2002). These divisions were never created by Foucault himself, but by researchers who had used and analysed his work<sup>2</sup>. These theoretical divisions often led to him being categorised differently:

the possibilities seem endless: structuralist, idealist, neoconservative, post-structuralist, antihumanist, irrationalist, radical relativist, theorist of power, missionary of transgression, aestheticist, dying man, saint, or if nothing else post-modern (Foucault, 1988: xiii).

Regardless, Foucault (1980: 80) refused to be categorised or labelled and argued that his works were often inconsistent and “an indecipherable, disorganised muddle”.

Foucault (1982: 208) claims that the focus of his work was on the self-constituting subject and “the different modes by which, in our culture, human beings are made subject”. There are two significant points that require clarification. The first relates to Foucault's understanding of the word ‘subject’. For Foucault (1982: 212) subject means “subject to someone else by control and dependence, and tied to his own identity by a conscience or self-knowledge...both meanings indicate a form of power

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<sup>2</sup> There are some problems with the division of Foucault's work into archaeological, genealogical and aesthetic/ethical. For example, *Madness and Civilization* (1979) was written during Foucault's archaeological phase but deals with dividing practices as in his genealogical phase (Välikangas & Seeck, 2011). By placing Foucault's work within these strict divisions, we run the risk of categorising him into social theoretical orientations and placing him within bounded disciplines of which he strongly rejected. (Foucault, 1984; Peters, 2005)

which subjugates and makes subject to". However, in his later work, he shifts from this technology of power/domination to technologies of the self. Technologies refer to "the government of individuals, the government of the souls, the government of the self by the self, the government of families, the government of children and so on" (Foucault, 1984: 256). For Foucault (1984) power is exercised through these technologies. He recognised that he may have placed too much emphasis on technologies of power/domination and contends that technologies of power/domination influence the ways in which individuals constitute and define who they are as well as how this regulates their practices.

In *The Courage of Truth 1983-1984*, Foucault (2011) emphasises the close conceptual relation between knowledge (truth), power (government) and the subject, and argues that "neither are reduced one to the other nor absorbed one by the others, but whose relations are constitutive of one another" (Flynn, 2005:262). For Foucault, history of thought can be explained as "focal points of experience" that relate to three means of objectification through which individuals are transformed into subjects (Ball, 2013: 122). Individuals are transformed into subjects by firstly, knowledge or the rules of discursive practice; secondly, by means of power and thirdly, by the means through which they turn themselves into subjects.

Ball (2013: 122) maintains that this notion of subjectivity is the "possibility of a lived experience within a context" where the "real basis of the self is both agent and object" (McGushin, 2011:19). As both an agent and object, we are constituted within this double bind (Ball, 2013). In early childhood education, the subjectivities of children are produced through regimes of truth and the interaction between power/knowledge. For example, the teachers constitute a literate child as one who needs to speak English only at school. However, children may resist this dominant discourse, hence displaying agency. At different times and in different spaces, children chose to speak in their mother tongue to their friends thereby resisting the hegemonic practice of only speaking English at the centres.

Foucault (1982: 222) says that power is an "agonism, a relationship that is a reciprocal incitement and struggle...less a confrontation than a permanent provocation". This point of emphasis in relation to subjectivity revolves around "an active process of becoming, as the work of the care of the self" (Ball, 2013: 121). In

this active process of becoming, we examine ourselves and make artful decisions and it is through this process that possibilities for freedom may be achieved albeit temporarily (Ball, 2013). The logic behind this is that if power acts on us and through our subjectivity, then this is the space where resistance and struggle arises. As Mendieta (2011: 122) argues, “it is because we have become, we can also become different”. Subjectivity in this sense allows for “the truth of freedom and freedom of truth” instead of discipline, normalisation and subjection (Ibid, 2011: 123). For example, in my study the early childhood teachers made strategic decisions to either conform to or resist different hegemonic, literacy practices. This resistance or conformity were examples of an “art or technology of living, a set of practices” through which the teachers established a relationship of “self-examination and determined artfulness” in order to be legitimated as literate thereby attaining some possibility of freedom albeit temporarily (Ball, 2013: 127-128).

This idea of technologies of power/domination and technologies of the self-enabled an understanding of how the teachers’ discourses of literacy inform their teaching, hence the constitution of the literate child. Foucault maintains that technologies of the self are important to understand how the self is constituted as this also provides possibilities for understanding how the self can be transformed. His work on subjectivity reveals the influence of power on the body from external control such as hierarchical observation and surveillance to internal control of thoughts and behaviour. This had significance for my study as it created possibilities for the literate child to be seen as both an agent and an object of control.

## **2.9 Conclusion**

In this chapter, I have shown how I used key constructs drawn from NLS and Foucauldian theory as data analytical tools to answer my research question: *What theoretical understandings enable new ways of thinking about literacy as social practice in early childhood centres for 3-4 year olds?* Throughout the different sections, I provided examples from my study and literature to contextualise the theoretical ideas. I started with key concepts drawn from NLS, viz. the literacy event and literacy practices. Heath (1983) defines a literacy event as observable situations in which reading, writing or any related semiotic system that plays a role in the observed action. As argued by Bloome and Bailey (1992), the literacy event comprises of multiple social situations where literacy has a function, the actions that

surround the activities and the people that comprise them. Investigating literacy events thus allowed for an understanding of the observed action, the meanings the participants gave to those actions and the ideological underpinnings that informed those actions. The concept of literacy practices was used to describe how patterns of actions observed in the literacy event were related to broader social and cultural models that people bring to the event and the meanings they attach to them (Barton & Hamilton, 2000; Street, 2000; 2005). Exploring literacy practices provided a lens to make sense of the literacy event, the knowledge and assumptions about the event and the social and cultural models regarding the nature of the event. These social and cultural models are socially constructed and constituted in discourse (Foucault, 1972). These discourses, which are often constituted in literacy practices, produce “meaning, ideas, ways of thinking and talking, beliefs and values” about literacy, learning, teaching and children (Jones-Diaz, 2007: 36). These understandings provided the link to research literacy as social practice by making sense of how literacy events and literacy practices are constituted within wider social, cultural and institutional discourses.

I was specifically interested in answering questions that related to the *how* of everyday life viz. *how* literacy as a body of knowledge was constructed and *how* this construction impacted on the literacy practices of early childhood teachers. Looking at the *how* of everyday life also led me to ask further questions such as *whose* literacies count and *what* literacies count? These questions had significance for understanding *how* certain knowledge were dominant whilst others were marginalised and the effects of this *how* on children, learning and teaching in early literacy classrooms. Foucault’s (1980) concept of discourse as illustrations of the power/knowledge matrix offered a lens to understand and interpret how literacy as a body of knowledge was produced and how this knowledge shaped the early childhood teachers’ literacy practices thereby bringing the literate child into effect. I drew on Foucault’s concepts of discourse; power/knowledge; disciplinary technologies of time, space, hierarchical observation, normalising judgement and the examination to understand how the literate child was brought into effect. The threads that I have explored around discourse; power/knowledge and disciplinary technologies provided an understanding of how the early childhood teachers and children’s subjectivities were constructed through the discursive conditions created

within the context of the early childhood centre. Hence, the theoretical framework called for a dialectical relationship with a methodology that enabled me to give visibility to literacy as social practice in early childhood centres for 3-4 year old children. In the next chapter, I provide an outline of the methodological choices I made to research literacy as social practice in early childhood centres for 3-4 year old children.

## Chapter 3

### Literacy as a social and discursive practice of research

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*The researcher and researched are constituted beings, effect of discourse and 'games of truth' (Michael Peters, 2004).*

#### 3.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the methodological decisions taken in fashioning a research plan to make visible literacy as social practice in early childhood centres for 3-4 year olds. In order to navigate my pathway to research literacy as social practice, I asked myself the question: *what are the discursive practices that inform research in literacy as social practice in early childhood centres for 3-4 year olds?* This question was based on the belief that researching literacy as social practice is constructed through discursive and institutional social practices (Comber, 2013). To answer the question I show how I constructed my research project by outlining the decisions I made and the anticipated effects of my research project. My intention was to make visible the discursive research practices that were used in this project viz. how I mediated what was said and heard, what I considered important to tell and in what ways. As such I give visibility to the discursive practices I used right from the choices for the methodological and analytical tools that were used.

I wanted to understand how literacy was socially constructed and locally negotiated in early childhood literacy contexts (Luke, 1997a). A study of this nature required an approach that shifted ideas from the notion of literacy as an individual set of skills with identifiable consequences to a **situated practice** account of literacy. Scribner and Cole assert (1981: 236):

Instead of focusing exclusively on the technology of the writing system and its reputed consequences...we approach literacy as a set of socially organised practices which make use of a symbol system and a technology for producing and disseminating it. Literacy is not simply about knowing how to read and write a particular script, but applying this knowledge for specific purposes in specific contexts in use. The nature of these practices, including, of course, their technological aspects, will determine the kinds of skills (consequences) associated with literacy.

In this sense, literacy is situated and people are situated – they act in relation to the situation in which they find themselves whilst simultaneously creating that situation (Bloome, Carter, Christian, Otto & Stuart-Faris, 2010). The implication is that people are active agents who act in and on the world in which they live.

In this chapter, I describe the methodology that I used in this thesis. The understanding above alerted me to the fact that methodology cannot be reduced to a “procedure, tool or technique used by the inquirer to generate and analyse data” (Schwandt, 2001:158-159). Rather, the methodology that I used in this thesis is in a dialectical relationship with the theoretical framework that I discussed in Chapter 2 as it involves my ontological and epistemological assumptions around the nature of knowledge and ways of knowing about literacy as a socially situated practice. Additionally, my subjectivity as a researcher is interwoven with my role in the research process, the ways in which I gained access to the research site, the types of relationships that I developed with the teachers and the analytical lens that I used in the data generation and the data analysis process.

To give visibility to the discursive practices of my research, I present an outline of the methodological orientation, sample and site, methods of data generation, process of data management and analysis and ethical considerations. In addition, a description of the reflexive qualities inherent in the research is outlined to make visible the choices made at every step of the research process. The chapter commences with an account of the methodological orientation of the study (Section 3.2). Included in this account is the rationale to locate my study within a qualitative framework. I also provide a detailed discussion of the methodology used in the study, which included a combination of ethnography and genealogy. In Section 3.3, I present a description of the sampling process, how the sites and participants were selected and the reasons for the choices made. Section 3.4 provides an explanation and a justification for the data generation methods that were employed in the study. Next, I pay attention to the way in which the data was analysed with specific reference to Foucault’s genealogy (Section 3.5). Foucault’s concept of discourse informed the data analysis process where discourse “systematically constitutes the objects of which we speak” (Foucault, 1972:54). In Section 3.6, I reflect on my role as a researcher and the different ways in which I negotiated the complexities of my subjectivity as the researcher. Section 3.7 provides an outline of issues relating

validity and reliability by considering what Silverman (2009) calls the authenticity and integrity of the research process. The final section, 3.8 explains the study's ethical framework, which is significant for all research (Creswell, 2012).

### **3.2 Constructing my 'Game of Truth' (Foucault, 1988)**

My study was essentially a piece of qualitative research and drew on post-structural conceptions of literacy as social practice. Many post structural theorists, with specific reference to Foucault, have analysed the notion of what constitutes the truth, and the truth claims that researchers make. In keeping with post-structural thinking, I recognise that my research account remains partial and constructed, as what I have seen and what I present are constructions of literacy as social practice that I considered important. To give visibility to literacy as social practice, I strategically entered into 'games of truth', where I negotiated an "ensemble of rules for the production of truth" (Gauthier, 1988:15). As such, the methodological approach used in my study constitutes 'games of truth' where I "constitute myself and the researched" by producing versions of reality that I considered to be credible and insightful to the reader (Peters, 2004:55).

Working from within a post-structural framework necessitated a multiplicity of truths and voices, and social and cultural influences of literacy as a socially situated practice. By identifying the early childhood teachers' discourses of literacy and looking at how these discourses impact on literacy practice, I was able to understand how power and knowledge intersect to create regimes of truth and how these regimes of truth work to regulate practice and constitute subjectivities (Foucault, 1977). My intention was to understand why early childhood teachers do what they do and how their actions are connected to their conceptualisations of literacy, literacy practices and children. Furthermore, I had to pay attention to how the participants in the contexts negotiated their subjectivities, individual agency and social relations of power. Marshal (1992) argues that discourses and their associated discursive practices produce and articulate power relations that work to "both constrain and enable" (Tan & McWilliam, 2009:215) literacy learning and teaching at the centres.

My main research question for the study: *how can literacy as social practice be made visible in early childhood centres for 3-4 year olds?* and the sub-question: *what are the discursive practices that inform research in literacy as social practice in early childhood centres for 3-4 year olds?* were best answered through a qualitative

research approach. This approach enabled me to look for “complexities of the social world” to develop a better understanding of literacy as social practice for 3-4 year old children (Edwards, 2001:117). Qualitative researchers are specifically interested in studying typical individual perspectives and experiences by developing an understanding of the meanings people place on the events and structure of their lives (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994; Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011). Using a qualitative approach enabled me to build a picture of the actions and interpretations of early childhood teachers by locating these in the shifting networks of complex interactions that make up the early literacy contexts (MacNaughton & Davis, 2001).

### **3.2.1 Researching literacy as a discursive practice: An ethnographic approach**

I start from the premise that if literacy is socially situated, it has to be studied in its context and use. Literacy as a social practice is embedded within discursive regimes that constitute literacy, literacy practices and children in particular ways. This social theory of literacy implies that in order to understand literacy, it is best to look at how it is used and the meanings literacy and its related elements have in particular contexts.

Ethnography as a qualitative research methodology is best suited to a close in-depth examination of literacy as social practice in real-life settings. Denscombe (2007) defines ethnography as a description of people or cultures as they go about their everyday lives. Ethnography has its roots in “anthropological and cross-cultural studies” as it encompasses any “study that aims to describe some aspect of socio-cultural understanding and practices of a group of people” (Siraj-Blatchford & Siraj-Blatchford, 2010: 193). In the case of my study, ethnography provided me with an understanding of the role that discourses played in the construction of literacy, practice and children at the ECD centres - a holistic account that included the beliefs, views, perspectives and values of all participants in the research study (Ibid: 2001). Bloome (2012: 7) argues that at its best:

Ethnography reconceptualises what a classroom is and what happens there; it illuminates a subset of society’s socialisation and enculturation efforts; it articulates the relationship between dominant social, cultural and linguistic groups to non-dominant groups; it generates new directions in curriculum and

instruction that addresses long standing inequities and it challenges extant educational theories of learning and knowledge.

As such, the use of ethnography in my study could be viewed as a political stance concerned with giving visibility to dominant and non-dominant discourses of literacy, the influence that these discourses have on literacy practices of early childhood teachers and how these discursive practices are implicated in the construction of the literate child.

Malinowski (1845-1942), widely recognised as one of the founding fathers of modern day ethnography, believed that if one wanted to understand people's culture one had to learn their language, live with them over a period of time and take part in their everyday lives. On the basis of his social anthropological research with the population of the Trobriand Islands in the Pacific, he was able to formulate principles of participant observation and ethnographic fieldwork (Malinowski, 1923). Papen (2005) argues that Malinowski's research served as guiding principles of anthropological research from the 1920's onwards. Although Malinowski (1923) believed that ethnography had to be as objective and realistic as possible, contemporary ethnographers situate themselves in a more interpretive and critical paradigm.

From its original conceptualisation, ethnography has shifted away from its positivist approach with its emphasis on the "discovery of universal laws and descriptions using neutral observation language" (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007: 183). In addition, the role of the observer taking a position where he or she does not disturb the field has also shifted to recognising that it is almost impossible not to disturb the field (Ibid, 2007). According to Fook (2002: 5) the post-positivist climate has challenged "canonical prescriptions about the proper way of making science" and calls for "epistemological openness and methodological pluralism". This post-positivistic climate also calls for an acknowledgement of the subjectivity of the researcher and the role of the researcher in relation to the participants, viz. researcher reflexivity (Buchbinder, Longhofer, Barret, Lawson & Floersch, 2006).

Researchers from within anthropology, education and sociology have adapted Malinowski's methods. From its original inflexible and demanding framework, researchers now using ethnography often combine a variety of approaches,

sometimes using both qualitative and quantitative methods. Contemporary ethnography is thus more flexible in its subject choice, uses more selective approaches and may include just one specific locality (Papen, 2005). These may include a school, a group of students or as in the case of my study, an early literacy classroom. Geertz (1973: 6) explains:

doing ethnography is establishing rapport, selecting informants, transcribing texts, taking genealogies, mapping fields, keeping a diary, and so on...what defines it is the kind of intellectual effort it is: an elaborate venture in, to borrow a notion from Gilbert Ryle (1971), “thick description”.

My intention was to generate a “thick description” of the “multiple dimensions, aspects, domains, institutions, practices and settings” (Geertz, 1973: 6; Bloome, 2012: 9) of early literacy classrooms for 3-4 year olds. I wanted to know what was happening in early literacy classrooms, what it meant and what its significance was for the participants from an *emic* rather than an *etic* perspective.

As discussed above, ethnography in its conventional form involves the ethnographer’s participation in the daily lives of the participants over an extended period of time (Hammersley & Atkinson, (2007). Measured against these criteria, my research was not a straight ethnographic study but rather, an ethnographic approach or a piece of qualitative research that adopted an “ethnographic perspective” (Bloome et al., 2010: 183). Due to limited time and resources, an ethnographic approach allowed me to present a “partial ethnographic account” of the view, perspectives, values and intentions of early childhood teachers in early childhood classroom for 3-4 year olds (Ibid, 2010: 48). Lather (1991: 13) claims, “the productivity of language in the construction of the objects of investigation requires a flexible rather than a realistic ethnographic reality”. Whilst the research might be considered a ‘partial ethnographic account’, it was orientated towards more depth and breadth. This was in keeping with post structural research wherein my research was constructed based on my aims of discovery and exploration rather than an exhaustive analysis of literacy as social practice.

Using an ethnographic approach enabled me to zoom in on early childhood classrooms as cultural sites where the social and cultural literacy practices were embedded within and part of a broader, on-going and evolving social, cultural and

political discourse. I was able to gather data from a range of sources such as classroom observations, interviews and video recordings of literacy practices and this allowed me to study literacy “within the logic of everyday life” (Papen, 2005: 72). As such, I was able to understand the actions and practices of early childhood teachers as behaviours with meaning (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011). As argued by Bloome (2010:51) and his colleagues, early childhood classrooms “are more than open spaces with furniture, they are cultural sites where children and adults enact a series of literacy events and practices that have particular meaning at the level of performance and at the level of significance for participants at the early childhood centre”. Consequently, using an ethnographic approach allowed me to “paint a picture in words; capture a likeness; recreate a feel of an event; or evoke an image” in order to understand the subjective world of the early childhood teachers (Bloome et al., 2010: 50).

### **3.2.2 Why Ethnography and Genealogy?**

I was specifically interested in how and why the views and perspectives of the teachers became so powerful that they influenced their early literacy practices and the ways in which they brought the literate child into effect. Foucault’s genealogical tools of discourse, power/knowledge and subjectivity, enabled ‘new’ ways of thinking about why and how certain literacy practices become normalised, whilst others were marginalised or silenced and the effects of this on the teacher, children, teaching and learning.

From the outset of my research study, I realised that I needed to understand the relationship between theory and method so that I could make sense of and engage in all aspects of my ethnographic study. As Birdwhistell (1977: 20) argues, “the decisions we take contribute to developing a coherent logic in use” which is needed to create a basis for claims that we might make. Moreover, he warns against the separating of theory from methodology and calls for the articulation of a logic-of-inquiry:

The interdependence of theory and methodology can be hidden by exclusive focus upon either philosophy or technique. Once separated, only the most sophisticated can reconstitute them in an investigatory practice (Ibid: 1997: 20).

Accordingly, I made use of an ethnographic approach mobilised through theoretical ideas emanating from Foucault's (1975: 115) "tool-box" to produce new ways of seeing and thinking about literacy as social practice.

Foucault (1972) contends that discourse analysis comes together around a relationship between the utterance as an event, the context that enabled the utterance and its impact on practice. This means that the utterance as, "an existence function of discursive meaning" has to be studied in the context of the "discursive event" viz. (Foucault, 1972:77). As such, Foucault's (1972, 1984) genealogy helped me to firstly, identify the early childhood teachers' discourses of literacy within the context of the "discursive event" by looking at the utterances of the teachers to understand how literacy and its related elements were constructed (Ibid: 1972:77). Secondly, I was able to trace the historical origins of these discourses in order to understand "the endlessly repeated play of domination" (Foucault, 1977: 150). Thirdly, I was able to identify the regimes of truth and norms related to literacy as social practice, identify legitimated, silenced and marginalised discourses and identify subjectivities that these promote. This is discussed in greater detail in Section 3.5.

Tamboukou and Ball (2003: 3) maintain that there are similarities between ethnography and genealogy. They further point out that even though ethnography is deeply rooted in "modernity, and genealogy oscillates between modernity and post modernity", both approaches share several commonalities (Ibid, 2003: 3).

Tamboukou and Ball (2003: 1-4) say that both genealogy and ethnography:

- interrogate the validity and universal authority of scientific knowledge;
- adopt a context-bound critical perspective;
- transgress through theoretical and methodological perspectives;
- point to the limits of dominant power/knowledge regimes;
- recover excluded subjects and silenced voices;
- highlight centrality of the body in socio-historical analyses; and
- restore the political dimension of the research.

I maintain that Foucault's (1972, 1991) concept of discourse and its implications for literacy practice is not homogeneous and can be best researched in its sites of

application such as early literacy classrooms. As such, ethnographic tools such as observation, interviews and video recording of literacy events and practices and Foucault's genealogical tools of discourse, power/knowledge, disciplinary techniques and subjectivity allowed me to identify the early childhood teachers' discourses of literacy as social practice, understand why certain literacy practices were legitimated whilst others were excluded or silenced and the effects of this on the subjectivity of the early childhood teacher and the child.

Foucault (1980: 97) argues that studying data at the micro level of the classroom requires a bottom up approach to understand how discourse, power and knowledge intersect to construct the object. As such, researching literacy as social practice in early childhood classrooms requires a:

A study of power in its external visage, at the point where it is in direct or immediate relationship with that which we can call its object, its target, its field of application.

I started my investigation with a literature review that helped me understand literacy and literacy practices to be contested within different contexts. I argue that multiple discourses compete for the teachers' attention within the different contexts and some of these discourses are more powerful than others. Therefore, using data generation techniques such as semi-structured interviews and observations characteristic of ethnography, afforded opportunities for analysis and interpretations that were based on Foucault's conceptualisations of discourse, power and knowledge. For example, in the data production process, my interactions with the participants helped me to identify particular regimes of truth related to literacy, children, learning and teaching. By considering the teachers discursive practices as they appeared in their talk and action, I was able to unpack *what* the teachers do; *why* they do *what* they do and *how* what they do does (Foucault, 1982). My intention was not to simply apply theory to practice or determine theory directly from practice. Rather, the methodology employed in my study allowed for going back and forth from data to theory, thus allowing for a continuous interplay between theory and practice.

Combining ethnography with Foucault's genealogy 'tools' enabled me to use a different lens to understand how discourses of literacy as a socially situated practice impacts on literacy practices and constructs the early childhood teacher, children,

teaching and learning in particular ways. I was able to pay close attention to the actual literacy practices of early childhood teachers within early childhood centres. For example, ethnography enabled me to code and categorise literacy practices to understand what and why teachers do what they do. Through genealogy I was able to map ideas around how these ideas work in practice (Tamboukou, 2003). Foucault (1982) claims that “people know what they do; they frequently know why they do what they do; but what they don’t know is what, what they do, does” (Ibid: 1982: 359). I was able to ask and answer questions such as:

- what is happening here?
- what do the teachers at the centres know to be able to do what they do?
- how, does what they know and do impact on children’s learning, their literacy practices and subjectivities of themselves and the children at the centre?

Ethnography and genealogy can be seen to be in opposition to each other. For example, Tamboukou and Ball (2003) believe that mixing methodologies can be dangerous if used haphazardly. I contend that using both ethnography and genealogy provided insight into what the early teachers do; why they do what they do and what, what they do does in early childhood literacy classrooms. Foucault (1980: 97) suggests that studying data from the micro-level or bottom-up is needed to understand how discourse, power and knowledge intersect to construct the object viz: “a study of power in its external visage at the point where it is in direct or immediate relationship with that which we can call its object, its target, its field of application”.

I saw ethnography and genealogy as a responsive way of studying literacy as social practice in early childhood centres. By identifying the teachers discourses of literacy as a social practice, identifying the constitutive nature of these discourses and looking at how these discourses impact on practice I was able to understand how “power and knowledge operate in its extremities, in its ultimate destinations, with those points where it becomes capillary, i.e. in its more regional and local forms of institutions’ (Foucault, 1980: 96). Both methodologies thus provided a way of thinking historically and geographically about how discourse, power and knowledge intersect to construct the literate child.

### **3.3 Researching literacy in practice**

In the previous section, I provided details of how I consciously tried to construct an ethical and principled practice for my research project by using a combination of ethnography and Foucault's genealogy. The practice of research also involved negotiation and compromise as my research project unfolded at the different sites. The following section provides an outline of how and why I constructed my research project in the way that I did. I provide justifications for the decisions taken and the consequences thereof. I begin by explaining why I chose the early childhood centres that I did, thereafter I discuss my relationship with the early childhood teachers, and finally I describe the scope and design of my research project.

#### **3.3.1 Choosing the Early Childhood Centres**

My study focused on early childhood teachers' discourses of literacy as social practice and how these discourses influenced their literacy practices. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011: 156) believe that a researcher makes judgements about the sample "based on their typicality or possession of particular characteristics being sought". I purposively selected two early childhood centres as the research sites for my study. There are a number of reasons for choosing these sites and these related to the nature of the early childhood centres, the children who attended the centre and the sense of welcome I felt at the centres.

The early childhood centres chosen for this study were located in diverse social contexts. The children at the centres were diverse in terms of race, language and religion and the majority of children were learning in a language that was different from their home language. Both the centres were privately run: one can be classified as middle-class and the other as catering for children from working-class backgrounds. I considered these early childhood centres to be the most appropriate for studying the ways in which literacy was constructed in the two disparate sites. The choice of the sites was based on what Foucault called real and ideal spaces: "real because they govern the disposition of buildings, rooms, furniture, but also ideal because they are projected over this arrangement of characterisations, assessments, and hierarchies" (1977:148). I wanted to understand how literacy teaching and learning was "embedded within the logic of everyday life" at two physically, socially and culturally disparate contexts (Papen, 2005). The choice of the research sites, the ethnographic methods; the textual and sociological discourse

analysis enabled me to study literacy 'within the logic of everyday life' at the different centres. This helped me to understand how discourse, power and knowledge play out at the different early childhood sites.

In addition, I already knew the principals from both the centres and this made gaining access to the research sites easier. My personal and professional relationship with the teachers at one of the sites (Cheerful Tots ECC) was initially made when I supervised students in teaching practice as part of my role as a teacher educator. In addition, the principal at the site was also involved in our practical teaching programme at the university. Her role was to facilitate understanding of teaching and learning in pre-school contexts. The choice of the second site was based on our students' involvement in a community project at the centre (Universal ECC). The students' involvement ranged from resource development to co-teaching with the teachers. My role was to supervise and assist students during the course of the project. My familiarity with both the research sites and conversations with students made me really think about important concerns that related to literacy, teaching and learning and its effects on young children.

At the start of my research study, I held meetings with the principals of the centres to determine whether the teachers and parent community would be amenable to my conducting research at the two sites. The principals handed out letters of consent to the parent community and the teachers. The consent letters included a brief explanation of the study, a description of the role of the teacher in the research process and a brief discussion of issues relating to anonymity and ethical considerations (See Appendix 1). Both the teachers and the parent community were supportive of my research project and consent was given for me to conduct the research at the centres. From the outset I was aware of the power dynamics that existed between myself, as the researcher and the teachers at the centre and its possible implicit disempowering effects. I realised that my role as researcher and teacher educator could be construed as a disciplinary mechanism. To circumvent this, I made it clear that my intention was not to assess their practice but to understand what they do and what they know and how this influences their practices. This is discussed in greater detail in Section 3.8.

From the outset of the research project I felt a sense of being welcomed as both a friend and colleague by the principals, the teachers and the children at the two

centres. To ensure anonymity of the early childhood centre, the teachers and the children at the different centres, I made use of pseudonyms. I consulted with the teachers and came to an agreement in respect of the pseudonyms that would be used. An agreement was reached that the centres would be called Cheerful Tots ECC and Universal ECC. In order to democratise the research process, I afforded the teachers the opportunity to choose their own names for the study and Teacher Dee and Teacher Shari were born.

The brief summary of the early childhood centres that I present below serves a dual purpose. Firstly, the summary highlights the contextual differences between the middle class and working class centres selected. Secondly, it provides biographical details of the children and the teachers at the diverse socio-cultural contexts.

### **3.3.2 Cheerful Tots Early Childhood Centre (Cheerful Tots ECC)**

The early childhood centre, which I have named, Cheerful Tots is located within a school that caters for female learners from Grade 1 to matric. The 3-4 year old group – the context within which the research was conducted is the only class in the school that caters for boys and girls. The school is situated in a quiet, leafy suburb that once catered for white middle class children during the apartheid years. The racial and class demographics of the suburb have changed since 1994 and now comprises of a mix of black/African and white working class inhabitants. It can be argued that while the outer suburbs of many South African towns remain segregated along racial lines, this does not remain true for the community where Cheerful Tots ECC is situated (Christopher, 2001).

Whilst the school is located within a working class community, the early childhood centre has created its own ethos of status, power and identity as one that produces 'good' academic results and one that caters for 'good' English language learning. The city where the research project was conducted has a very strong Afrikaans-speaking ethos. Given this, many of the schools in the suburbs use Afrikaans as a language of learning and teaching. As a result, there is a shortage of 'good' English schools in the city. With the de-racialisation and de-segregation of schools in post-apartheid South Africa, many newly elite and middle-class Black/African, White and immigrant parents choose to send their children to Cheerful Tots ECC to learn because it is considered a 'good' English school.

The early childhood centre caters for three groups of children, viz.:

- children between the ages of 3 and 4.
- children between the ages of 4 and 5.
- children between the ages of 5 and 6 – Grade R.

The school fees for the 3-4 year old group was R3800 per term/per child (2013) and this excluded costs for extra-curricular and co-curricular activities like monkeynastics, ballet, speech therapy and extra English lessons. At the time of this study, the centre offered a half programme that started at 08:00 and ended at 13:00. The children usually start arriving at school from 07:30. The teacher and the two helpers greet and welcome the children as they enter the classroom. There were 30 children in the classroom. The language of learning and teaching at the centre is English.

The school is well secured with fences that separate it from the suburban community. A security guard stands at the gate and visitors are expected to fill in details giving reasons and duration of their visit. The entire centre is separated from the rest of the school. Each age group learning site is gated and separated by walls and fences. Children from the different year groups do not interact with each other and they remain secluded within the confines of their own space. The walls of the centre are brightly painted with characters from nursery rhymes and fairy tales e.g. Little Bo Beep, the three little pigs, Hansel and Gretel, Disney characters etc.

As you enter into the 3-4 year old space, you have a sense of abundance, which is typical of a middle class early childhood provisioning. Spaul's (2013) study of poverty and privilege in South African education revealed that middle class preschools and early childhood centres are well resourced with trained teachers. Cheerful Tots is a prime example of middle class early childhood provisioning. Fences surround the 3-4 year old age group space and each entrance to the different spaces have slam-lock gates. The slam-lock is fixed high up on the gate so that the young child cannot enter or leave the property without the assistance of an adult. You enter into a passage that is brightly painted and lined with children's drawings and paintings. On one side of the passage are shelves with cubicles.

Each cubicle has a photograph of the child so that he/she knows which space belongs to him/her. Children place their bags and all their belongings that they need for the day into their cubicles. The toilets are situated at the end of the passage. There are separate toilets for boys and girls.

The classroom is brightly painted with lots of pictures, shapes hanging from the ceiling, shelves stocked with resources and different learning corners. The learning corners comprise of a kitchen, a library corner with a television, and videos for young children and a bedroom with toys and books. Children's tables and chairs are colour-coded and clustered together in groups of eight. The outdoor space is laid out in a park-like setting nestled amongst trees, flowers, shrubs and grass. Little pathways take you to different sections where the children can play, have fun and interact with their peers. There are brightly painted, jungle gyms, swings, slides, a sandpit, a shopping area, a bicycle track and tables and chairs clustered around in groups.

Teacher Dee, the teacher at Cheerful Tots ECC comes from a white, middle-class family. She attended a private pre-school at the same centre where she is now teaching. Her primary and high school years were spent in an English, private girls' school. She completed an undergraduate and postgraduate degree at university and has a one-year diploma in ECE. Teacher Dee has 18 years of experience in working with young children. She constantly keeps up-to-date with current developments in early childhood education by attending training workshops and seminars organised by the Department of Education. There are two helpers at the centre and their role is to assist with second language translations, cleaning of the indoor and outdoor spaces and supervision of children's outdoor play. The helpers are second language English speakers and have no formal training in ECE.

### **3.3.3 Universal Early Childhood Centre (Universal ECC)**

The second centre, which I have named Universal ECC, offers a half-day programme. At the time of the study, learning time commenced at 8:00 and ended at 13:00. The ECC is situated in a former 'coloured' community<sup>3</sup>. During apartheid,

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<sup>3</sup> Using the racial classifications as determined by the apartheid government is a political choice that I make. I am aware of the tensions that exist by re-inscribing the construct of race as was used during apartheid in a post-apartheid South Africa. At the same time, I acknowledge the inequalities that the racial classification stands for: economically, politically and socially. This is my attempt to give visibility to the inequalities based on race, social class and language that exist in present day early childhood education and care.

people in South Africa were classified as black, Asian/Indian, coloured and white (Erasmus, 2010). The term 'coloured' is an ethnic classification of people from mixed racial origin (Ibid, 2010). The ECC is situated on the main road of the former 'coloured' suburb.

The once segregated community is now quite integrated with many black people having moved in from the so-called black 'townships'. The community has pockets of working class and middle class people and clear physical separations exist between these two groups of people. The early childhood centre was initially a hostel that was attached to the high school next door. The hostel has been converted into an early childhood centre that now caters for four groups of children:

- children between the ages of 2-3.
- children between the ages of 3 and 4.
- children between the ages of 4 and 5.
- children between the ages of 5 and 6 – Grade R.

The centre is separated from the community by barbed wire fencing and access to the early childhood premises is via an intercom system at the main gate. Barbed wire fences and intercom systems can be construed as symbolic barriers that separate the centre from the outside world, which creates binaries of safety/risk. The impression that one gets is that the centre is a safe space, protected from the outside working class community. The early childhood centre is brightly painted with animal characters and pictures of books and crayons on the walls. The outdoor play area has jungle gyms, swings, slides and playing areas. The grass does not grow well in this outdoor door area so the play space is sandy and dusty. There are few trees for children to play under. Parts of the outdoor play area are covered with shade cloth. The school fees in 2013 were R500 per month. After-care services were provided at an additional cost of R300 per month (2013). The children are given a cooked meal every day. The school day started at 08:00, which was signalled by the ringing of the school bell. The ECD teachers were there to receive and welcome the children each morning.

The early childhood centre is a two-storeyed building. The kitchen, principal's office storage rooms, staff and children's toilets and the 2-3 year old classroom space are

situated on the ground floor. The first floor comprises of classrooms for the 3-4 year old group, the 4-5 year old group, the pre-school group and a set of children's toilets. There were 32 children in the 3-4 year old classroom space. The children came from the local 'coloured' community and the neighbouring black township. The children at the centre were all second language English speakers. The black children spoke Sesotho and the coloured children, Afrikaans. The language of learning and teaching at the centre is English.

Each classroom is 5m x 5m. The classroom comprised of a teacher's table, a set of moveable plastic shelves, a built-in cupboard and plastic tables and chairs. The moveable plastic shelves were used to store the children's bags. Because the classroom space was so small, the shelves were placed outside the classroom. The children's tables and chairs were stacked in the corner of the classroom and the tables were only used during whole-class group work. The walls of the classroom were decorated with phonetic and alphabet charts, number charts, body parts charts, days of the week, seasons and the daily timetable. Although, the classroom space was small, it was kept neat and tidy.

Teacher Shari, the teacher for the 3-4 year old group came from a single-parent working class home. Her mother was a domestic worker but is now unemployed. Teacher Shari is a single parent with one child. She is a Sesotho home language speaker but has basic interpersonal communication skills in Afrikaans and English. She attended a school that catered for 'coloured' children where she was taught in Afrikaans. Teacher Shari was unable to complete her matriculation as she fell pregnant and had to leave school. At the time of the study, she had 3 years of teaching experience. She attended a training programme organised by the DoBE, which focused on implementation of the Free State Early Childhood Curriculum. The training took place over a two-week period for 2 days per week. There were no teacher assistants, as the centre could not afford to pay for extra help.

Table 3.1 provides an overview of the children in the 3-4 year old classroom with a focus on gender, race and language. One is offered a glimpse of the diversity that existed at the ECC.

**TABLE 3.1 Overview of the 3-4 year old classroom: 2013**

	Cheerful Tots ECC	Universal ECC
Context	Middle Class	Working Class
Gender: Boys	7	15
Girls	23	13
Race/Ethnicity:		
White	8	
Coloured	3	5
Indian	1	
Black	14	23
Chinese	3	
Bengali	1	
Language:		
English	8	
Afrikaans	4	5
Sesotho	14	23
Mandarin	3	
Bengali	1	

Table 3.2 provides an overview of the teachers' race, gender, language proficiency skills, education and training and years of teaching experience. The table provides the reader with biographical information about the early childhood teachers at the different centres. It depicts a marked difference in terms of education and training and these are directly related to race and socio-economic class. The table also reveals the kinds of support in the form of helpers/carers that are provided to the teacher in the middle class context.

**TABLE 3.2: Teacher information**

	Teacher Dee	Teacher Shari
Early Childhood Centre	Cheerful Tots ECC (Middle class context)	Universal ECC (Working class context)
Race	White	Black
Gender	Female	Female
Language Proficiency	English (Home Language) Afrikaans (Communicative Level)	Sesotho (Home Language) Afrikaans and English (Communicative Level)
Education and Training	B.A. Higher Diploma in Education. Honours: English and Speech and Drama Educare Diploma	No matriculation 2 weeks training: ECD Free State Curriculum
Years of Teaching Experience	18 years	3 years
Number of helpers in the classrooms	2	None

### 3.4 Data generation and production

My data generation began on 28 January 2013 and continued until 20 September 2013. The data generation comprised of the following activities, which will be discussed in further detail in this section:

- individual interviews with each of the teachers. I interviewed Teacher Dee on 28 February 2013 and Teacher Shari on 1 March 2013. I had to go back for clarifications that arose after the transcriptions. This took the form of taped individual conversations;
- observations of classroom practice at Cheerful Tots ECC from 13 March 2013 until 14 June 2014;
- observations of classroom practice at Universal ECC from 17 July 2013 until 20 September; and

- video recordings of a day in each early literacy classroom.

### **3.4.1 Using interviews to research literacy as social practice**

This data set comprised of transcripts that I produced through semi-structured interviews with the two teachers. In keeping with the research question, I realised that using a semi-structured interview rather than a structured interview schedule would enable me to identify the teachers' discourses of literacy as social practice. Semi-structured interviews allowed for the identification of the cultural realities of the teachers' practices as well as enabling engagement with issues as they arose (Silverman, 2009). For example, Teacher Shari spoke about the role that her friends played in helping her become literate. I was able to identify how the different games enabled literacy learning, the roles of the participants in the game of playing school and the kinds of literacy events that she was engaged in. Using a structured interview would not have allowed me this leeway.

Although I had produced a set of interview questions in advance, there was a great deal of flexibility. I wanted to follow the agenda of the teachers and this left me with room to pursue unexpected aspects and concerns that arose during the interviews. The interview questions focused on:

- early experiences of becoming literate;
- training and development and teaching experience;
- constructions of literacy;
- how children become literate;
- the role of the early childhood teacher in literacy development;
- early childhood literacy teaching; and
- problems experienced in teaching young children.

While I had a general idea or plan of how the interview will unfold, the questions only served as a guide as I allowed the teachers to dictate the way in which they wanted to respond. This guide served as an instrument mid-way between unstructured and structured interviews, depending on the kinds of responses that I received from the teachers (Cannold, 2001). For example, I made use of structured questions when I asked the teachers about their training and experience. However, the follow-up

questions provided the participants with the freedom to elaborate on how their training and experience influenced their practices.

From the outset, I was aware of the power relations that existed between myself and the teachers and the constant negotiation of what could be said and how it should be said. Therefore I tried to be as explicit as possible about my research intentions and the kind of relationship that I wanted to develop with the teachers. Before the interview, I wrote a letter to the teachers requesting permission for their participation in the study (See Appendix 1). My intention was to let the teachers know of my research objectives before we met. Once I had their consent to participate in the study, I met with them informally to introduce myself and to tell them about my experience as a Foundation Phase teacher. During this informal meeting, we negotiated times and dates for the interviews.

At the start of each interview I explained to the teachers that my purpose was to explore their understandings of literacy and how these understandings impact on their practice. I told them that if any questions made them feel uncomfortable, they were not obliged to answer. I also explained that there would be times when I would come back and ask further questions for clarification, which would be in the form of informal conversations. Once I had completed the transcriptions of the interview data, I had informal conversations with the teachers to make sense of what was said. These conversations allowed for the teachers to justify what they said or why they said what they said. These informal conversations also led me to question my own assumptions about literacy and what literacy does; and allowed me to look for other ways to make sense of the teachers' thoughts and feelings about literacy as social practice.

I felt it necessary to discuss our roles in this research project. After I discussed my research project with them, I said:

*I feel that this project should be a very interactive process... I will type out what we both said and then I am going to show you and if you feel that you would like to change something or say something else, we can talk about it. It is important that we talk and listen to each other. Is that okay with you?*

I wanted to demonstrate my willingness to share the power relations in the research relationship. This was shown in my style choices and particular choice of language

phrases such as: *I feel, we can talk about, it is important that we talk and listen to each other, and is that ok with you?* The use of words like *we, listen and talk to each other,* and *I am going to show you* reveal a co-operative stance to researching literacy in early childhood classrooms. My aim was to unlock the possibilities for conversations around alternative views, which coincided with the teachers' views.

However, my role as a teacher educator and a researcher at times interfered with the co-operative stance that I wanted to take. For example, at the outset of the interview, I had not yet developed a close relationship with the teachers. Teacher Dee *"I am terrible with interviews and I am just getting to know you, and you may know a lot more than I do because you are from the university. So every time you hear me stuttering don't worry it's just me thinking, so just carry on"*. Teacher Shari also spoke of her uncertainty and this was directly related to my being a person from the university – *"I was sitting there and thinking...Ooh my goodness! Colwyn is not coming anymore and I was getting a bit stressed. I was so nervous because you are from the university"*. My response was one of re-assurance: *"Teaching 3-4 year old children is something new to me – I think I can learn a lot from you. Remember there is no right or wrong answer...I just want to hear about what you do and what are your thoughts and feelings about literacy and your practices"*.

In hindsight, I do acknowledge that my role as a teacher educator from the university played a major role during the interview sessions. Both the teachers "distanced" themselves from me by saying that I knew more than them because I was from the university. However, I tried to work around this by saying *"I can learn a lot from you because I haven't been teaching young children for 7 years; teaching 3-4 year old children is something new to me."* While the position that I adopted as a learner and the co-operative stance I took in the interviews could be construed as non-threatening, I need to acknowledge that my subjectivity as a researcher and teacher educator comes with its own set of power relations. These directly relate to the perceptions of the teachers of individuals who work at the university as having more knowledge. Having more knowledge can be seen to presuppose and constitute the power relations that existed between the teachers and myself as the researcher (Foucault, 1977).

The questions that I prepared stemmed from my review of literature on literacy as social practice as well as conversations I had with my supervisor. Although I had a

number of loosely prepared questions, the interviews were dissimilar in that my probing and questions for clarification differed for each teacher. This was because I allowed the interview to flow freely and this allowed the teachers to dictate the agenda for the interview (See Appendix 3). Although I started off with a set of prepared questions, the teachers somewhat deviated from my agenda or plan, but I did not insist that they answer the questions in a straightforward manner. My intention was to get them to be as comfortable as possible with me so that I could get a real sense of how they thought about literacy and their literacy practices. Getting the teachers to talk about their lives and their work can be described as “dialogical data generation” where the “subjects of the study are asked to reflect on their lives in ways that may be new to them and to share in the production of theory relevant to their lives” (Carspecken & Apple, 1992: 513). As I was interested in the utterances made by the teachers that related to their conceptualisations of literacy, children, learning and teaching, I allowed them the space to regulate how the interview would unfold. Through my prompts and asking questions that required clarification, I was able to get a real sense of how the teachers were experiencing their work.

Luke (1997a) postulates that teachers’ practical knowledge and claims to truth need to be deconstructed along with grand meta-narratives. Therefore, the interviews were situated and hence, needs to be viewed within the context of its production. The interview as text “remains produced for, with and partially by the researcher” (Comber, 1996: 70). I therefore had to read the interviews in relation to what the teachers were willing to say to me within the context of my research purpose and questions. Baker (1995: 14) rationalises that interviews are “moral accounts in that they describe what they take to be the normative order by which they and others should live...[they are] culturally plausible accounts of what they do and think”. From the interview data, I was able to identify the discourse of literacy as a social practice, which Baker (1995) termed as the ‘normative order’. The discourses I identified were:

- literacy as skill;
- the becoming child;
- the ‘good’ teacher; and
- the ‘good’ parent.

From reading the interview texts against the discourses that were produced in the classroom observations, I was able to identify the theories and the justifications that the teachers used when talking about their literacy practices. In Section 3.5 I provide an account of the data analytical procedures that I used to analyse the interview data.

### 3.4.2 Experiencing literacy as social practice through observation

My most intensive data generation work was classroom observation of literacy events and practices. Classroom observations provided a means of understanding how early childhood literacy teachers' discourses influenced their classroom practices. My intention was to "observe participants in their natural settings, their everyday social settings and their everyday behaviour" (Cohen, et al., 2011: 465). I conducted my classroom observations in the early childhood classrooms from 13 March until 20 September 2013. The following table provides a schedule of my observations at each site.

**TABLE 3.3: Schedule of observations at the Early Childhood Centres**

<b>Centre</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Total number of observations</b>
Cheerful Tots ECC	13 March - 14 June 2013	27 days
Universal ECC	17 July - 20 September 2013	29 days

I observed classroom literacy events and practices at each centre for 3 days per week from 13 March 2013 until 20 September 2013. My observations extended from Wednesday through to Friday. It was not always possible to conduct classroom observations on a regular and consistent basis. This was as a result of my commitments as a teacher educator at the university and timing of the school holidays, For example, I was only able to conduct classroom observations for 3 days during March 2013 because of commencement of the school holidays. Immediately after the school holidays, I was involved in the assessment of students in practice for a period of two weeks.

Initially, I spent two weeks observing for a full day at each centre. I also video-recorded a full day in the early literacy classroom. My intention was to get a detailed view of the early childhood classroom routines, everyday literacy practices and the interactions between the teachers and the children. The video recordings enabled me to look at non-verbal cues such as facial expressions of the children and the teachers. Once I had a sense of how children and the teachers go about their daily work, I went in to observe specific literacy events, for example, a morning ring, or an outdoor play activity, or a small group activity. As an outsider, these observations were helpful in understanding what the teachers and the children were doing within the daily routine of the classroom context.

On a continuum of observation from “participant as observer to “observer as participant” (Glesne, 2006: 50), I found myself at different points depending on the nature and types of activities I observed. For example, during child-initiated outdoor play, my position was closer to “participant as observer” (Ibid, 2006: 50). At other times like when the teacher organised structured learning experiences such as the morning ring, story time, small class and whole group activities, my role was that of “observer as participant” (Glesne, 2006:50).

The focus of my classroom observation was to identify how the teachers’ discourse of literacy as a socially situated practice influenced their everyday literacy practices. I kept a detailed daily account of everyday literacy practices and the routines in each literacy classroom without any *a priori* categories to read my field notes. While still involved in data collection, I started coding my data inductively into analytical units or discourse strands by identifying the key objects of literacy as social practice (Johnson & Christensen, 2008). This also helped me to decide on a focus for further classroom literacy observations that were more identifiable and manageable.

After reading and re-reading my classroom observation transcripts, I found overlapping discourse strands of time and space as significant disciplinary techniques that were used to regulate children’s learning. From here I became more focused and aware of how the teachers organised time and space as part of their daily routine. Specifically, I observed how the teachers organised themselves, which included organising different learning materials at different times and organising space across different classroom activities. Some of these included the morning ring time, outside playtime and snack time, small-group work and whole-class group

activities. I was able to understand how time and space were used to regulate children's learning, bodies and movements. In addition, I also began to observe how children began to regulate themselves during these literacy events.

However, my intention was not only to look at how time and space were used to regulate children's movements, bodies and their learning. I also wanted to know how the teachers everyday literacy practices positioned children as well as how the teachers organised learning for the different groups of children in their classroom. Therefore, I combined specific literacy events and classroom observations with "issues" that emerged from the interviews. For example, my observations of classroom routines were connected to the teachers' utterances about children and their learning. The teachers classified children as needing specific kinds of support because of their lack of English language skills in the home. Chapters 5 and 6 provide an indication of how I used specific literacy events and classroom observations to analytically categorise information that emerged from the interviews.

I need to acknowledge my presence as observer and its effects on the teachers and the children. Before I went into the early childhood classroom, I was aware that my presence could be construed as a form of surveillance and judgement of the teachers' literacy practices. I also realised that my presence in the classroom could be part of a disciplinary mechanism that could act to shape, change or direct behaviour. To circumvent this, I continuously made the teachers aware that my intention was not to critique their practices, but rather, it was about learning *what they do, how they do what they do and why they do what they do*. I showed them the interview transcripts and records of classroom observations to try to get a sense of how they felt, thought and acted in relation to my presence in the classroom. However, it was inevitable that the teachers would feel as if I was observing their performance and behaviour. For example, during one of my observation sessions, Teacher Shari directed a nervous look at me and explained why she had sent a boy out of the classroom (Classroom Observation: 5 September 2013). I had not expected this explanation, as I had not noticed the incident.

I wanted the teachers to know that I felt part of the classroom community. I assisted by handing out resources and reading stories to the children, rather than just standing around and observing without participating. However, I need to acknowledge that the issue of power is inherent within my role as a researcher and

this cannot just go away because I have tried to conduct the research in an ethical manner. Also, it will not dissipate because I made an effort to be more than just an observer and become part of the classroom community. However, studying literacy in its social-situatedness carries with it issues of power and governmentality. In some sense, the early literacy classroom is a space where I could study how literacy as power and knowledge is linked to ways in which individuals govern others and are in turn, themselves governed.

### **3.5. Using Foucault's 'toolbox' to analyse my data**

In this section I describe research methods that I used to analyse my data. I begin by describing the dilemmas that I encountered when first attempting to do discourse analysis from within a Foucauldian framework. Thereafter, I describe the choices that I made in developing my methodological plan.

There is a clear distinction between different approaches to discourse analysis within education. Taylor (2004) makes a distinction between discourse analysis that draws on the structural and linguistic features inherent within texts and discourse analysis that is informed by post-structural theorists such as Foucault, Derrida and Lyotard and others. The connection between these post-structural theories lies in "theorising that rests upon complexity, uncertainty and doubt and upon a reflexivity about its own production and its claims to knowledge about the social" (Ball, 1995: 269). In my study, the theorising that Ball (1995) refers to, focuses on making visible literacy as social practice in early childhood centres for this visibility enables one, "to show that things are not self-evident as one believes, to see that what is accepted as self-evident will no longer be accepted as such", (Foucault, 1988: 154).

Foucault (1972) argues that discourses as knowledge and truth claims play an important role in constructing how we see and make sense of the world. Despite articulating the important connection between discourse, knowledge and power, Foucault (1994) was reluctant to prescribe specific rules, method or procedures to discourse analysis stating that "I take care not to dictate how things should be" (1984: 288). This proved difficult because I had no idea of how I was going to analyse my data without a specific method or procedure. I consulted a variety of sources that offered some sort of interpretation on doing discourse analysis from within a Foucauldian framework. I found that many scholars were hesitant to outline or prescribe specific methods for Foucauldian discourse work. For example, Arribas-

Ayllon and Walkerdine (2008) communicate that it is quite usual for researchers to put forward a proviso that there are no set methods or procedures for analysing discourse from within a Foucauldian framework. They propose a 'number of methodological signposts' (Ibid, 2008: 98) so as "not to dictate how things should be" (Foucault, 1994: 288).

Graham (2006: 2) also discusses the difficulties she encountered in finding "coherent descriptions of how one might go about discourse analysis using Foucault". However, she warns against applying a highly systematic approach to discourse work within the Foucauldian tradition. But this still left me with a dilemma, as I had no idea of *what to precisely do* to analyse the discourse data sample. Lemke (2005) suggests that researchers need to find their own pathways in their analytical decision-making. I realised that in order to make sense of what I was doing I had to develop a methodological plan that focused on the problem at hand viz. *what are the discursive practices that inform research in literacy as social practice in early childhood centres for 3-4 year olds*. To navigate my pathway through discourse analysis, I drew on researchers who had constructed discursive analytics and procedures generated from a Foucauldian perspective (Arribas-Ayllon & Walkerdine, 2008; Gore, 1998; Graham, 2006, 2011; Luke, 1995; Willig, 2003, 2008). This was in keeping with Foucauldian (1975: 115) thinking where he says:

All my books...are little tool boxes...if people want to open them, to use this sentence or that idea as a screwdriver or spanner to short-circuit, discredit or smash systems of power, including eventually those from which my books have emerged...so much better!.

I used the aforementioned researchers' work and Foucault's technique of genealogy to plan a sequence of analytical stages. The position and choices made were based on my topic, research aims, research questions and sub-questions.

### **3.5.1 A genealogical approach to analysing literacy as social practice**

While Foucault did not outline a process for doing discourse analysis, he did provide strategies and concepts that can be used when doing a genealogical discourse analysis (Foucault, 1972; 1978; 1984). A genealogy is a historical method, where one looks for the history of the present by understanding how certain regimes of truth are sustained and legitimated over time. This provides an avenue for understanding

how power circulates in “the production of discourses and knowledge, and their power effects” (Carabine, 2001:276).

Genealogy offered me a possibility to create a history of the present by looking at the different discourses within the texts. This led me to think about how a particular way of thinking about literacy came to be perceived as a truth object or regime of truth. However, my intention was not to provide an extensive account of the history of why and how these objects of truth arose. Rather my intention was to understand how power and knowledge connected to produce discourses about literacy as social practice and its effects on the early childhood teacher and children, teaching and learning. The rationale according to Rabinow (1984) and Walkerdine (2002) for using a genealogical approach was to eschew the notion of grand truths and avoiding setting up of discourses in a binary fashion.

I asked questions of the data texts to understand how particular constructions/objects of truth were sustained and maintained (Rabinow, 1984). The questions focused on how literacy as social practice was spoken about, who was speaking, the positions from which the early childhood teachers spoke, and the institutions that enabled the teachers to speak, store and distribute what they said. I was able to explore the competing and contradictory discourses inherent within the texts – written, verbal, and non-verbal. These explorations revealed the circulatory nature of power and the different ways by which children and teachers were governed and in turn governed others. This meant moving away from seeing power as only repressive to seeing how particular literacy practices were essential in the development of a literate subject. Genealogy thus allowed me to see what caused early childhood teachers to do what they do, why they do what they do and the power effects of what they do and hence, potentially to change what and how certain things are done (Gore, 1998). As Foucault (1998:11) says:

All my analyses are against the idea of universal necessities in human existence. They show the arbitrariness of institutions and show which space of freedom we can still enjoy and how many changes can still be made.

### **3.5.2 Analytical procedures to research literacy as social practice**

In this section I present the procedures that I used to analyse the data sets. I first provide a rationale for the procedures that I used and then explain the analytical

procedures that were used in analysing the data. This rationale for this visibility is based on the notion that “clarity around process and practice of method” is important for transparency and to provide an understanding of the assumptions that informed my analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006: 7).

The analytical procedures that I initially developed enabled me to be sensitive to the different data sets and thus I was able to make connections to the ideas framing my study. Consequently, I was able to dissect texts and identify teachers’ constructions of literacy, which enabled me to gain insight into how teachers constructed a literate child, their role and the role of parents in early literacy development, thereby making sense of the particular literacy practices that were used to enhance literacy learning. However, I also found that in following these steps methodically, Foucault’s multifaceted theoretical insights were not being elicited. For example, I was unable to make sense of what the utterances or statements as a discourse sample was *doing*. I had to develop a discursive analytic that would enable me to use the set of procedures that I had developed whilst still allowing for a more open analytical play with the data texts (Wetherell, 2001). This will be discussed in greater detail in the next section.

The objective of my methodological plan was to interrogate the “true/false discourses, the correlative formation of domains, objects and the discourses that are verifiable and falsifiable in relation to them...the effects on reality connected to them” (Foucault, 1980). My intention was not to make known the meaning behind *what is said or not said* (Foucault, 1972). Rather my intention was to look at the statements and question the effects of what those statements *do*, and how those statements influence and inform literacy as social practice. Foucault (1972:49) argues that “there is no subtext” and therefore, the role of the discourse analyst is to establish why certain statements appear to the exclusion of others, and what functions those statements serve in constructing “the objects of which they speak” viz. literacy and its related elements. Drawing on Foucauldian ideas for my data analysis, required an imagination for thinking about how things might be ‘other’ to what they were at the centres. For example, an imagination for thinking about how certain discursive practices enabled literacy learning but simultaneously marginalised children’s full participation and sense of belonging at the centres.

I set out by analysing my data in three stages. This decision was based on answering my main research question: *How can literacy as social practice be made visible at early childhood centres for 3-4 year olds?* I looked at the following sub-questions to answer my main research question:

- What are the early childhood teachers' discourses that inform literacy as social practice at the centres and what are their effects?
- How have the early childhood teachers' discourses of literacy as social practice informed their practices at the centres and what are their effects?

### **Stage 1: Discursive formations: Locating the object of discourse**

This stage was based on the idea that discourse constructs and makes visible particular 'truth objects' and related ways of seeing and practising (Graham, 2006:17; Foucault, 1980). The main question for this stage was: How is literacy as social practice constructed by the teachers?

My analytical questions for this stage were:

- what do the teachers say about literacy at the centres?
- what is said about the related elements of the discourse e.g. children, learning, parental involvement and the teachers' role?
- how do literacy and its related elements influence the early childhood teachers' literacy practices?

My analytical aims for this stage were:

- to define and locate literacy discourse;
- to identify the related elements of literacy discourse;
- to describe how literacy discourse and its related elements are constructed; and
- to describe how literacy and its related elements influence the early childhood teachers' literacy practices.

This stage involved the identification of different ways in which literacy as social practice was constructed through "types of enunciations" or statements, which "constitute the objects of which they speak" (Foucault, 1972: 205; 54). The statements that were used by the teachers defined and constructed the objects of discourse viz. truth claims of what counted as literacy, an ideal literate child, the role

of the teacher and parents in literacy development (Foucault 1972). Foucault (1972) describes the statements as a function rather than a sentence. As a function, the statements can be “theorised as a discursive junk box in which words and things intersect and become invested with particular relations of power” (Graham, 2005:3) resulting in an interpellative event (Althusser, 1971). These statements enabled certain “rules or forms to become manifest”, which resulted in regimes of truth about literacy, children, teachers, parents, learning and teaching to become “manifest [able], nameable and describable,” (Foucault, 1972: 99, 47). Naming and describing literacy as social practice at the centres allowed me to identify how the statement as a function of a particular discursive practice enabled the literate child to appear: “to be placed in a field of exteriority” (Foucault, 1972:50). For example, the teachers saw literacy as an autonomous skill. The discourse of literacy as skill brought into effect and made visible other related truth objects and ways of seeing and practicing viz. the literate child as one who is able to read, write, communicate, listen, speak etc. (Graham, 2006: 7; Foucault, 1980).

## **Stage 2: Recognising discourse and tracing its constitutive nature**

Recognising and tracing the constitutive nature of discourses was connected to the previous stage. The rationale for this stage was similarly based on the idea that discourse constructs objects in particular ways (Foucault, 1980). Foucault (1980) discerns that a literary text is part of a larger framework of texts, institutions and practices. Therefore, discourse analysis only finds its usefulness within the agenda of a history of systems of thought (Foucault, 1977). Therefore, in order to understand how these ways of thinking arise, it becomes necessary for me to trace its constitution.

My analytical question for this stage was: What knowledge do the teachers draw upon in the construction of literacy as social practice at the centres?

The analytical aims for this stage were:

- to trace the constitutive nature of literacy as social practice and its related elements by identifying the knowledge that are drawn upon in its construction (Willig, 2003, 2008); and
- to identify how these knowledge function in the construction of literacy as social practice.

Foucault (1972: 77) explains that the statement is “an existence function of discursive meaning”. The teachers’ statements enable certain rules or forms to become manifest viz. what is literacy, what can a literate child do, how children become literate etc. He further maintains that in order to understand how certain regimes of truth have come to be legitimated, we need to trace the steps in its constitution. I had to do a review of secondary research that focused on early childhood literacy to identify where these regimes of truth about literacy, learning, teaching and children originated. As Poster (1990) tells us, Foucault’s (1972) work regards a literary text as part of a larger framework of texts, institutions and practice. Within these bodies of knowledge are statements that validate and provide descriptions, specifications and expertise required to become literate in early childhood classrooms.

Butler (1997) contends that one exists not only by *being recognised* but also by being *recognisable*. An analysis of the statements therefore requires a description of

“statements, to describe the enunciative function of which they are the bearer, to analyse the conditions into which this function operates, to cover the different domains that this function presupposes and the way in which those domains are articulated” (Foucault, 1972, 87).

I looked at the different ways in which literacy as social practice was located within wider discourses – how it was described, recognised, functioned and classified i.e. what was achieved from constructing literacy as social practice in this fashion within the different data texts, what was its purpose and meaning and how did it connect to other constructions of literacy as social practice produced in the other parts of the text. My concern in this step was to look at the effect that the statement had – **what does it do and what are the effects of what it does?**

I had to read the statements carefully to understand how those statements frame a particular discursive position i.e. how the teachers’ assumptions of literacy as social practice come to present a world view and prepare the means for those discursive practices that derive from this position (Graham, 2005). These statements legitimate particular ways of seeing and understanding the world and come to represent according to Deleuze, (1988: 11) a “family of statements” that can be traced and linked to a constituting field of power-knowledge (Foucault, 1972: 214). For

example, certain truth statements around what literacy is included what a literate child is able to do and should know. This knowledge was constituted within the wider discourse of child development and school readiness. These truth statements legitimated child development and school readiness discourse bringing into effect particular assumptions of what literacy is, what a literate child is capable of doing, the role of the early childhood teacher in developing literacy etc.

### **Stage 3: Constructions of subject positions and subjectivity**

The main question for this stage was: What is brought about or affected by constituting literacy as social practice in this way i.e. how do these truth statements position subjects, construct subjectivities and how do these constructions legitimate, silence, marginalise particular ways of being and doing literacy at the centres. The analytical aims for this stage were:

- to identify the regimes of truths and norms related to literacy as social practice;
- to identify the subject positions that literacy as social practice promotes; and
- to identify the marginalised and silenced discourse within the data texts.

In this step, I looked at the statements within the data sets to determine *what did the statements do?* I.e. how do the statements constitute the early literate child, what are the complexities and contradictions of constituting the child in this way and what is made visible or invisible when the child is constituted in this way? A statement “always defines itself by establishing a specific link with something else that lies on the same level as itself...almost inevitably, it is something foreign, something outside” (Deleuze, 1988:11). In tracing the constitutive nature of the statements, one is able to identify discursive formations from within a specific field of knowledge. At the same time allowing for statements to be read in different ways enables one to identify different discursive formations that work to marginalise, exclude or silence other discursive practices.

Discourse positions people in particular ways and the subject positions that one takes up or different ways in which others are positioned offers discursive locations from which to speak and act (Willig, 2003). In analysing the statements in the different data sets, I was able to question the constitutive effects of what was being

said in order to identify the unsaid - the silenced and marginalised discourses. For example, in describing what a literate child should be able to do from within child development discourse, the child is seen as needing guidance to be made ready for school. The young child is thus positioned as one who needs to be subjected to normalising practices on the road to becoming literate.

### **3.5.3 Analytical procedures: Getting to know my data**

Braun and Clarke (2006) state that data analysis should be both an on-going and iterative process. I applied stages 1 to 3 to the semi-structured interviews, observations and video recordings of literacy events and literacy practices. In doing this, I was able to address my research questions keeping in mind the different ways in which literacy as a social practice influenced the discursive construction of the literate child. After each data collection session, I typed the texts from the interview recordings and observation notes into a word processing document. Practically, I read each data set a number of times whilst making notes about my overall impression on each text using analytical memos (Johnson & Christensen, 2008). This helped me to look for relationships between the different data sets and reflect on what I was learning from the data. The following extract is an example of my initial comments/notes on the interview transcripts.

**TABLE 3.4 COMMENTS ON INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTS**

<p>Teacher Dee: They <u>know</u> at least six or seven shapes, they <u>know</u> their basic colours, they can <u>count</u> to ten, they can <u>recognise</u> probably 1, 2, and 3, they have learnt to <u>hold</u> a crayon properly, they can <u>cut</u> with a scissors and <u>cut</u> a straight line or just <u>cut</u> randomly. They have probably <u>remembered</u> about 10, 11 or 12 nursery rhymes, some songs; they have <u>participated</u> in a concert...they have <u>learnt</u> how to <u>interact</u> with bigger children.</p>	<p>truth object / regime          literacy = skill.          know, recognise, hold, etc.          Wider discourse:          playing school, parents, training, exp.          child develop. / school readiness          subjectivity:          becoming child</p>
<p>Teacher Dee: I think that you need to <u>know how children develop</u> – emotionally, socially, and physically and so on. But I also think that you need to know what the child <u>need[s] to be able to cope in Grade R</u> and in the Foundation Phase. This will help you with planning for teaching.</p>	<p>Teacher: know child dev school readiness          Positioning: good teacher          child: school ready → becoming          Discourse: child dev school readiness</p>
<p>Teacher Shari: Well... I think that he should be able to <u>sit still</u> and <u>listen</u> when I am talking. Also he must be able <u>speak</u> properly and be able to <u>answer questions</u> that I am asking him. He should also be able to <u>hold a crayon</u></p>	<p>Becoming child          sit sit, listen          speak – perceptual skills, readiness          links to lit as skill</p>

I underestimated the amount of time I needed to interpret my data. However the time spent was useful as I was able to code my data inductively into meaningful analytical units (Johnson & Christensen, 2008) or discourse strands by identifying the key objects of literacy as social practice. The inductive codes helped me to understand how the truth objects of literacy and its related elements were being talked about. The data sets were coded using both theoretical informed *a priori* codes and inductive codes which I developed while I was reading the data (Johnson & Christensen, 2008). In this way I was able to go back and forth from data to theory and from theory to data to allow for the continuous interplay between theory and

practice. By continuously re-reading the texts, I was able to identify the discourse strands that emerged from the data by layering it with theoretically informed codes. Mayring (2000: 21) calls this “evolutionary coding”, as the themes evolve from theoretical considerations into a complete operational list based on empirical data.

In the next stage I wanted to know, *how did these truth objects become manifest?* (Foucault, 1972). This stage involved looking at what was said and how what was said produced particular regimes of truth and how these regimes of truth were located within wider discourses. In order to locate and trace the constitutive nature of the discourse I asked the following questions of the text:

- *where do these statements and enunciations come from?*
- *how does what is said, produce particular kinds of knowledge?*
- *what is the connection between what is said to wider discourses in early childhood education and how do these connections inform what is said and how it is said?*

My intention in this step was to look at the origin and development of the discourses to show how they were located within wider discourses.

At the beginning I envisaged that this step would comprise of two distinctive steps. I would firstly identify the knowledge and locate them within wider discourses. However, through my readings of the data and my deepening understanding of the inseparability of knowledge and discourse, I began to see this as one step. Going back and forth between data and theory helped me to make sense of how certain information became regimes of truth precipitating common sense ways of thinking about literacy, learning, teaching and children. This was in keeping with Carabine’s (2001: 275) suggestion who maintains that discourses can be thought of as “historically variable ways of specifying knowledge and truths, whereby knowledge are socially constructed and produced by effects of power and spoken in terms of truth”.

In the next step I analysed the structure of the discursive statements and enunciations by asking questions such as:

- *what ways of acting, doing, and seeing are normalising literacy practices?*

- *how do these ways of acting, doing and seeing construct and position the literate child?*
- *how do these constructions and positioning impact on literacy practices of early childhood teachers?*
- *what forms of subjectivity are legitimated, marginalised and silenced?*

Foucault (1977) suggests that instead of asking what the author in the text reveals, we need to ask what subject-positions are made possible within such texts? The rationale for this step is based on Foucault's (1981) arguments that discourse should neither be viewed as having an exclusive effect nor as an instrument of power: "discourse is not just that which translated struggles or systems of domination, but is the thing for which and by which there is struggle" (Foucault, 1981: 52-53).

Once I had an overall picture of the macro characteristics of the data texts, I was able to zoom into different discourse fragments to give visibility to literacy as social practice at the centres. In order to understand how discourse constructs the objects of which they speak, I had to combine my reading of the structural and linguistic features of the individual statements by placing them within wider discourses that I established (Foucault, 1972). I had to constantly ask the following questions:

- *who is the author of the text?*
- *what is their position on literacy and its related elements?*
- *how does what they say and how they say what they say draw on particular knowledge?*
- *how does what they say and how they say what they say, position and construct the literate child?*

It is important for me to acknowledge that the data that I was producing and presenting is incomplete for a number of reasons. Post-structuralism acknowledge that data is selected, produced and shaped rather than naturally occurring, complete and objective (Comber, 1996). As the author of this piece of research, I deliberately and instinctively made decisions about how to produce reality in a credible and insightful manner. This was based on my own positioning within the research, my research questions, my methodological decisions, the theoretical framings of my study and the ways in which I analysed my data. For example, during my initial

analysis of the data, the data that was produced was unmanageable as there were too many disconnected discourse strands. I had to make a decision as to what data I would select and how it would be produced. This decision was based on recognising that my analysis was based on the theoretical framings of the study, my research questions and my reactions to the data.

The discursive analytic proved useful to analyse literacy as social practice at the ECD centres. I was able to move both in and out of the text by looking at the statements and enunciations, tracing the genealogy of the discourses by locating them within wider discourses and identifying how children and teachers take up multiple positions at the centres. In this way I was able to move back and forth from theory to data and data to theory.

### **3.6 Reflexivity and my role as a researcher**

Developing an awareness of myself as the researcher, and examining this role at different points of the research process is considered important in qualitative research. I considered it important to understand how my subjectivity shaped the research process right from the research topic through to the choices I made in terms of the writing up of the research project. I am not suggesting that being aware of one's subjectivity will guarantee objectivity or value-free research. Instead, I suggest that my subjectivity is a social construction through interactions with others in different contexts and is not a fixed category. This is in keeping with the theoretical framework that I have adopted in this study where I understand the early childhood teachers and children's subjectivities as being discursively produced in different times and in different spaces. In this section, I discuss how I negotiated the complexities of my subjectivity as a researcher. I focus specifically on the theoretical orientation of the study and my relationship with the research participants.

As an educational researcher, former Foundation Phase teacher, student and teacher educator, I bring with me particular histories, beliefs, assumptions and values about literacy. In a journal article entitled: *Teacher educators' conceptions of teaching and learning in the early years*, I show how my own history, beliefs, assumptions and values informs my practice as first, a foundation phase teacher and later a teacher educator (Ebrahim, Martin, Koen, Olivier, & van Zyl, 2015). In keeping with post-structural research, I considered it important to reflect on my

positionality as a researcher and teacher educator in order to “strengthen the epistemological moorings” of the study (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992: 46). My interest in early literacy began when I started working as a teacher educator in early childhood education. I was teaching early literacy and language on the Bachelor of Education programme. Whilst reading about literacy practice and research in early childhood education, I came across the work of Heath (1983), Street, (1993), Gee (1990, 1996, 2000, 2014), Foucault (1997), MacNaughton (2005), Hall, (1997, 2002), Luke (1992, 1995, 1997a,b), Barton, Hamilton & Ivanic (2000), amongst others. These works were influential in reframing and broadening my understanding of literacy, literacy as social practice and discourse.

My journey into post-structural theory and the work of Foucault in particular, was not an easy one. I had difficulty in seeing how post-structural ideas could be translated into practice. As a former Foundation Phase teacher, and now a teacher educator, my experiences of literacy, learning and teaching were based on the belief that literacy was about reading and writing. When I began my work as a teacher educator, the notion of literacy as a unified set of neutral skills that can be applied across all contexts remained unchallenged (Street, 1993). My role as teacher educator was to teach to the imperatives outlined in policy where the assumption was that literacy is unitary, that it is a neutral process and independent of its social context and use (Lankshear & Knobel, 2006). Thus, it was easy for me to see the usefulness and common sense ideas of applying best early literacy practices in early childhood classrooms.

However, my reading of post-structural theory in early childhood education and Foucault’s concepts of discourse, power and knowledge created a sense of disquiet within me. In unpacking my historical, social and educational discourses around literacy learning and teaching, I came to the realisation that I had often used my positional power as a teacher to label children as deficit when they had not acquired particular literacy skills in terms of school knowledge. This realisation led to feelings of guilt and shame as I had pathologised particular groups of children and this was based on the perceived negative aspects of children’s home and community experiences. Foucault’s concept of the constitutive power of discourse helped me to see beyond the theory and practice divide. I began to see how my discourses of

literacy, learning, teaching and children have the power to produce and constrain what I do, why I do what I do, and how what I do does to myself and others around me.

I had to constantly ask myself questions about whose interests this piece of research was serving – was it feeding into academic knowledge that has devalued and pathologised particular groups of children or was it feeding into my particular discourses around literacy learning and teaching? I came to the realisation that working from a post-structural perspective required “theorizing that rests upon complexity, uncertainty and doubt and upon a reflexivity about its own production and its claims to knowledge about the social (Ball, 1995:269). Re-thinking my notion of literacy meant trying to view literacy in its social situatedness as a more humanistic and engaged praxis (Freire, 1970). These new beliefs were based on a concerted effort on my part to promote transformational learning and social justice in early literacy. Researching literacy as social practice enabled me to understand that social phenomena emerge from a multitude of factors, which interact with each other to produce different effects in different contexts.

In order to understand literacy as a socially situated practice, I had to constantly bring together my internal thoughts into the domain of the interpersonal (Bloome, et.al. 2010). This difficult shift required an understanding of the worldview of the early childhood teachers – their experiences, desires and frustrations thereby giving visibility to their literacy practices. Therefore I needed to give the participants a central voice in the research process. In moving the internal conversations into the domain of the interpersonal, I was able to engage with the research participants. These interpersonal exchanges revolved around why, what and how early teachers think, feel, value and act in ways that identify them as literacy teachers. At the same time, I endeavoured to share my discourses of literacy; how these discourses had changed over time and how these discourses influenced my present day practices. These conversations helped me to make sense of how certain knowledge become legitimated and others marginalised. I was also able to see how power operates to regulate teachers and children within the context of the early childhood centre.

During the observation of classroom literacy events and practices, I was aware of how my ‘presence’ could be construed as intimidating by the teachers. I was conscious of every movement that I made as I did not want the teachers to feel that

they were under some form of surveillance. I pretended not to notice when some things did not go well in the classroom. At times I would look the other way or pretend that I had not observed certain actions of the teachers. In modifying and changing the way in which I conducted myself, I was also subjected to the working of power in the same way that the teachers were. However, this also reveals that the decisions that I made to turn away or pretend not to have seen what was done is also based on my judgements of certain behaviours which I consider to be inappropriate.

### **3.7 Research as a practice of authenticity and integrity**

There have been considerable arguments over the validity and rigour of post-structural research (See: Alvesson, 2002; Lather & Moss, 2005; Lather, 2006). There have been on-going debates in educational research, which have created binaries between quantitative research and qualitative research (Alvesson, 2002). Lather (2006:784) supports a broader definition of research “scientificity”, rather than being limited to traditional, positivist notions of rigour and objectivity. This blurring of lines between what is considered scientific knowledge, unlocked possibilities for me to re-think about literacy research in early childhood centres. For example, by using both genealogy and ethnography, I was able to identify everyday pedagogical practices and understand how power/knowledge intersected within these discursive practices to construct the literate child.

Silverman (2009) argues that research generalisability in qualitative research is often paid attention to through the sampling process. In my study, generalisability was addressed through the details that I provided in the whole research process including the data analysis procedures. The interviews and observation transcriptions provided an appropriate basis for rich data analysis. Reading and re-reading of the texts enabled me to identify the teachers’ discourses and their discursive practices. I was able to “build theories” about literacy as social practice at the ECD centres Silverman (2009: 13). These theories can be construed as facilitating research generalisability and it is envisaged that this research opens up possibilities to extend to pre-service early childhood teachers, early childhood teachers and teacher educators in the field of early childhood education.

Research validity requires paying attention to both method and interpretation. I have started from the premise that I make no claims to truth or to the “ultimate knowledge”

(Guba & Lincoln, 2005: 205). I take the view of Lather (2006) who maintains that validity is an inescapable and elusive factor that marks out the limits to research. Lather (2006) suggests that researchers take a position on methodology as epistemology. In my study, I have made visible my research process right from the methodological orientation, sample choice, data generation methods and data analysis procedures. I have also given visibility to my reflexivity and my role in this project. I therefore consider that my inventiveness for validity and the visibility that I gave to each stage of the research process was an appropriate fit for my research project.

### **3.8 Ethics and research as a discursive practice**

Ethical considerations are considered important during all phases of the research process (Cresswell, 2012). It is therefore important for me to reflect on how I tried to be ethical during the research process right from the informed consent, anonymity and confidentiality, data production, interpretation and analysis of the data and finally to the writing-up process. Plummer (2001: 228) suggests certain ethical principles to guide and protect the participants as well as the researcher during the research process:

- respect, recognition and tolerance for persons and their differences;
- an ethic of care;
- equality, fairness and justice;
- autonomy, freedom and choice; and
- minimising harm.

My project was completed through guidance on ethical conduct of research from the Post-Graduate School, my research supervisor and the Faculty of Education Ethics Advisor. The Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Education granted me clearance to conduct the study and an ethical clearance number was allocated. My Ethical Clearance number was UFS-EDU-2011-0057 (See Appendix 5). The study was considered as low risk, as there were no anticipated risks involved to the research participants. An invitation was extended to the principal of the early childhood centres, the teachers and the parents of the children. Their choice to participate in the study was voluntary. The consent letters contained an explanation of the study, details of my proposed data collection methods and an outline of the participants'

role in the research project. Included in the consent letter was an option to withdraw from the study at any time should they so wish (Silverman, 2009). Both the teachers were willing to participate in the study. (See Appendix 1 for the participants' consent forms).

Once I had transcribed the interviews and the observations of classroom literacy events and practices, I showed these to the teachers. I did this because I was aware of the power disparity between the participants and myself as the researcher. Getting the teachers to read the data texts was my way of trying to downplay my positional power as the researcher. I have tried to present my data interpretation and analysis with integrity and in an ethical and fair manner. I believe my ethical reflexivity and ethical responsibilities extended throughout the research process.

Although my research project did not directly involve children as part of the research community, I had to consider the possibility that I would interact and engage with them at the centres. I had to keep in mind the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child (2009) on provision, protection and participation in everyday contexts, including those where my research was conducted. To ensure the protection of the children in the study, I sent out letters to the parents telling them about my study and the different ways in which the data would be collected. (See Appendix 1 for the letters to parents).

At both the centres, consent was given by the parents for their children's learning to be observed and for video recordings of lessons. In my letters to parents I told them that the video recordings would be used for my research project as well as for the enhancement of students' learning. Consent was freely given and I assume this was because I had indicated that my study formed part of the European Union's and the DoBE's project to enhance learning and teaching in early childhood education. The European Union and the DoBE had funded my research project. The involvement of the European Union and the DoBE might have carried some of its own power and status attached to it. In addition, I believe that involvement in the project was as Ebrahim (2008) suggests, based on a belief that participation brings about social change for both early childhood education and for the status of early childhood teachers.

My role with the children varied and this was dependent on the type of activities that they were engaged in. For example, during teacher-directed activities I was seen to be a teacher. The children would ask for my help by asking for directions on how to complete particular activities. During outdoor play activities and child-initiated activities, I was more of a “playmate” and “friend”. I would join in the children’s outdoor play activities and play games with them. This was also the space where I could get children to talk about themselves and their experiences of being in school. Using ethnography and Foucault’s genealogy to research literacy as a socially situated practice, allowed me to be part of the action, but at the same time I was able to stand back and see things from the children’s perspective. “Being there” and “standing back” (Tamboukou & Ball, 2003) not only allowed me to be as objective as possible, but also advanced my intentions to speak about the real world at the early childhood centres.

### **3.9 Conclusion**

Chapters 2 and 3 were linked to formulate the theoretical and methodological framework for this thesis. Chapter 2 outlined the theoretical framework that underpinned this research project. Foucault’s work on discourse, power/knowledge, time and space, techniques of power and subjectivity was indispensable in analysing the data to understand how literacy as a social practice is constituted.

In this chapter, I have provided an outline of the methodology that I employed in the study as well as an outline of the sample, data collection methods and Foucauldian informed discourse analysis. I have shown how I constructed a research plan to answer my question: *what are the discursive practices that inform research in literacy as social practice in early childhood centres for 3-4 year olds?* To be able to answer this question, I recognised that a qualitative approach would help me explain the complexities, difficulties and contradictions of the teachers’ social world. Combining ethnographic and Foucauldian genealogical tools for data generation, data production and data analysis provided a different lens to understand why certain beliefs about literacy, learning, teaching and children become regimes of truth and how these influence early literacy practices and its effects on children, teachers, learning and teaching (Foucault, 1977). This paradigmatic proliferation (Lather, 2006) enabled me to see things differently, thus conscientising me about the “complexities of the social world” (Edwards, 2001: 117).

Ethnographic data collection methods such as observation and interviews and Foucault's genealogical tools of discourse, power/knowledge and subjectivity provided understandings of how certain regimes of truth were sustained and legitimated. I was able to make sense of how power circulates in the "production of discourses and knowledge and their power effects" (Carabine, 2001: 276). This facilitated a deeper understanding of what teachers know and what they do in early childhood literacy classrooms, how this knowing and doing impacts on their literacy practices and what is the effect of their knowing and doing on the literate body/mind.

In Chapters 4, 5 and 6, I present my data and data analysis. In Chapter 4, I present an analysis of the semi-structured interviews to identify the truth effects of the teachers' constructions of literacy as social practice. In Chapter 5, I look at how everyday literacy pedagogic practices are embedded in the spatial and temporal regulation of the young child. In Chapter 6, I examine how the literate body is trained and subjected to the workings of disciplinary power through everyday literacy pedagogic practices. These three data chapters, together with the study's conclusions go some way to address the main research question of the study: *How can literacy as social practice be made visible at early childhood centres for 3-4 year old learners?*

## Chapter 4

### The discursive construction of literacy as social practice

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#### 4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I present my analysis of the semi-structured interviews to address my research question: *what are the early childhood teachers' discourses that inform literacy as social practice and what are their effects?* The semi-structured interviews revealed how the teachers' utterances enabled "rules or forms to become manifest" to "constitute the objects of which they speak" (Foucault, 1972: 99; 49). I was able to identify some of the taken-for-granted assumptions that worked to produce regimes of truth about literacy as social practice at the centres. However, as befitting Foucault, these utterances and their effects were circulatory. For example, in the analysis of the semi-structured interviews, I identified certain truth effects that produced regimes of truth related to literacy, children, learning, the role of the teacher and parents in literacy learning, whilst simultaneously identifying discourses that that were used as technologies of power and government.

The concept of discourse was central to understanding how literacy as social practice was constituted at the ECC. Foucault (1972: 80) sees discourse as the "general domain of all statements and sometimes as a regulated practice that accounts for a number of statements". As components of discourse, these statements are interconnected with systems of knowledge, which can be understood as effects of particular relations of power (Ibid, 1972). The power and truth effects of discourse produce knowledge, truth, discursive practices and subjectivities (Foucault, 1972). These truth effects "systematically constitute the objects of which they speak" thereby making it possible for literacy as a social practice to become "manifest, nameable and describable" (Ibid, 1972: 49; 41). A detailed description of how the concept of discourse was used in my study is outlined in Chapter 2, Section 2.3.

In Section 4.2 through to Section 4.5 I identify the taken-for-granted assumptions that worked to produce the truth objects or regimes of truth related to literacy as social practice (Graham, 2006). Foucault's (1984) genealogy enabled me to identify

the contradictions, the problems and deviations that worked to construct literacy as social practice at the centres. As discursive conditions, they made it possible to bring into existence early childhood teachers' discourses of literacy at that moment in time to make sense of how these discourses inform their literacy pedagogical practices. I begin each section by firstly identifying and locating the objects of discourse. Thereafter, I trace the constitutive nature of the discourse by identifying the knowledge that was drawn upon in its constitution (Willig, 2003, 2008). Finally, I look at how the discourse positions individuals in different ways and the effects of this subject positioning on the individual. This chapter provides the foundation for Chapters 5 and 6 to make visible literacy as social practice in ECCs for 3-4 year olds.

In semi-structured interviews and informal conversations I asked the teachers to tell me about their work as early literacy teachers at the centres. The questions centred on the following constructions of their work:

- Early experiences of becoming literate.
- Training and development and teaching experience.
- Constructions of literacy.
- How children become literate.
- The role of the early childhood teacher in the construction of the literate learner.
- The role of parents in early literacy development.
- Problems experienced in teaching young children.

From the teachers' utterances and a close reading and analysis of the semi-structured interview transcripts, I was able to identify four 'truth' objects or "definitional discourses" that worked to construct literacy as social practice at the ECC (Taylor, 2001: 297). The genealogical methods outlined above reduced the data to find that early childhood teachers produced literacy as social practice in how they constructed literacy, children, themselves as literacy teachers and parental involvement in literacy development. The four 'definitional discourses were: (i) *literacy as skill*, (ii) *the becoming child*, (iii) *the good teacher*, and (iv) *the good*

*parent*. I used a diagram as outlined by Johnson and Christensen's (2008) to map a pathway for how the chapter would unfold (See Appendix 4).

The discourses that I present in this chapter are dependent on and partial for a number of reasons and these were connected to the epistemological and theoretical framings of my study. Epistemologically, I take the stand that literacy as social practice is directly located in our social worlds and embedded within wider historical, social, cultural and institutional discourses. In the South African context, early childhood education is largely informed by child development discourse, DAP discourse and constructivist approaches to teaching and learning (Prinsloo & Stein, 2004; Ebrahim, 2010). These discourses influence and shape our understandings of literacy, children, the role of the teachers and parents in literacy learning. Foucault's (1972) work on discourse opened up possibilities for me to develop insights into the social constructedness of literacy. This meant moving beyond the "traditional frameworks of developmentalist, constructivist and emergent literacy approaches" to looking at how different discourses compete and collide to produce regimes of truth about what can be said about literacy, children, the early childhood teacher and parental involvement in literacy development (Jones-Diaz, Arthur & Beecher, 2000: 5).

Because of the large data corpus and the thick description of the discourse data that I present in this chapter, it became impossible for me to provide a full description of all my interpretations. Working from within a post-structural framework, I recognise that the data that I am presenting in this chapter is shaped, selected and produced by me rather than naturally occurring, complete and objective (Comber, 1991). As it was impossible to detail all my findings in its entirety, I have made conscious choices of which parts of the data I would include and which I would leave out. Hence, the following discourses represent a degree of my selection and my "game of truth" (Peters, 2004: 51).

## **4.2 Literacy as skill**

The teachers' utterances revealed taken-for-granted assumptions about what constituted literacy. These assumptions created regimes of truth, which enabled what counts as literacy and how it was understood to become "manifest, nameable

and describable” (Foucault, 1972: 41). The teachers talk constructed literacy as an autonomous, technical skill:

*Teacher Dee: I think...it is communication – it is through doing, like acting, vocalising, and lots of conversations...listening to others and responding to them...through play, reading stories and reading on your own. If you cannot read and write as far as I am concerned you cannot learn. But it is also about being able to speak clearly and being able to listen and understand what is being said... like when they listen to stories, when they talk to me or their little friends. Learning is all language based...knowing the language...reading, speaking and so on... (Interview: 01/03/2013).*

*Teacher Shari: [Literacy is] reading and writing, listening, talking... I think that they must be able to speak to you and to their friends; they must listen and answer questions (Interview: 28/02/2013).*

The above statements articulate what Foucault (1988) termed social and discursive technologies that operated as a “material series of processes...system of ideas, concepts, values and beliefs” (Grosz: 1990:63). These technologies authorised and sanctioned different sign systems that assigned particular meanings to the construction of literacy (Foucault, 1988). As a discursive construction, literacy was defined and understood in terms of a discrete set of individual skills or characteristics – *listening, speaking, reading and writing, doing, acting, answer questions, understand what is being said* etc. which children needed to acquire. The dominant discourse of literacy as a skill created regimes of truth around the skills and competencies required to becoming literate. The simplistic identification and location of literacy within the individual highlights the power relations inherent within the discursive construction of literacy as a skill. This construction positions and constructs children in different ways, which inevitably leads to hierarchy and ranking of children against these normalising standards of literacy as a skill. Technologies of power such as standardisation, regulation, normalisation and ranking result from and maintain the discourse of literacy as skill. This is evident in the statement uttered by Teacher Dee: “*because if you cannot read and write as far as I am concerned you cannot learn.*” Situating literacy within the human subject and the identification of skills and competencies required to become literate constructs the subjectivity of the

literate child, which can invariably lead to positioning of different children as deficit in relation to the skills that they need to acquire. For example, if a child cannot read, write, listen, speak etc. he/she cannot learn.

The legitimization of the autonomous model of literacy with its emphasis on individual, technical or neutral skills reveals the discursive shift towards the functional nature of literacy (Street, 1984). Being functionally literate in ECD contexts requires the acquisition of individual skills needed to complete different literacy tasks and involves the ability to recognise the “different sets of expectations needed for different types of communication” (Comber, 1996:208). For example, the teachers talked about being able to “*listen and answer questions; speak clearly; listen to stories*” etc. which shows how being literate in this context is primarily spoken of and measured in terms of identifiable skills required to perform efficiently within the classroom context.

Luke (1997b) argues that all teachers, classrooms and approaches to literacy begin from assumptions about what literacy is, the optimal ways it can be acquired, and how a literate person should look and act. Therefore I needed to look backwards to make sense of how these socially constructed assumptions became regimes of truth (Foucault, 1977). The teachers at the centres had particular constructions of what it meant to be literate and these were related to their life worlds. These, which were historically and culturally constructed, enabled them to take up particular positions about literacy, children, learning and teaching. Two discursive strands emerged strongly across the semi-structured interviews – playing school and becoming literate with parents. These themes enabled an understanding of how the teachers’ assumptions of literacy were constituted, consequently influencing their experiences of literacy as a socially situated practice. Both teachers recalled different experiences of their childhood and how they became literate. Teacher Shari based literacy learning on her experiences of playing school. Teacher Dee’s parents were instrumental in helping her become literate.

#### **4.2.1 Playing school**

Whilst Teacher Shari spoke about her grandmother, mother and a teacher at school as being important in helping her become literate, she focused on the role that the children whom she played with, had on her literacy development.

Teacher Shari's mother was a cleaner in a white, middle-class, Afrikaans home. The children of that family were instrumental in helping her become school literate through their games of playing school. During these literacy events, one of the children would play the teacher where she "*would teach me things that she learnt at school*". Teacher Shari learnt ways of doing and being literate by listening to stories, counting, singing songs, identifying shapes, reciting nursery rhymes, playing word games and pretend play. The children were aware that this form of play was a means of revising work that was done at school thereby preparing them for school literacy practices. One can therefore maintain that the children learnt the school discourse through apprenticeship in communities of practice where they acquired valued ways of doing and being literate through guided participation from a more knowledgeable child (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Rogoff, 1990).

Foucault (1988) argues that as self-determining agents, we are capable of conforming to or resisting the structures of domination within modern society. In the games of playing school, Teacher Shari negotiated discourses and subjectivities by conforming to certain hegemonic discourses and subjectivities with seemingly "unquestioning compliance" (Brown & Sumsion, 2007:14). When Teacher Shari was young, Afrikaans and African languages were used for schooling. Whilst the apartheid government supported home language instruction and learning, its intentions were more insidious as they were consistent with the ideologies of apartheid. Alexander (1989), Hartshorne (1987) amongst others, argue that home language instruction was used as a political means to perpetuate racial inequalities and ethnolinguistic divisions within the Black community. In addition, it also promoted the language of power of the ruling party viz. Afrikaans.

Foucault (1980: 69) uses the phrase "the politics of knowledge" to describe the "process by which knowledge functions as a form of power and disseminates its effects of power". Legitimizing home language instruction enabled the apartheid government to control power/knowledge by claiming to be acting in the best interests of the different ethnic communities. However, this legitimization of home language instruction was a means of ensuring social control, subordination and division. Kamwangamalu (1997:249) argues that it is not surprising that for many black

people, even to the present day, “mother tongue instruction has been synonymous with inferior education”.

Teacher Shari believed that the children she played with “*knew a lot more than I did*” and she “*learnt a lot from them when we played games together.*” In an analysis of Foucault’s work on the effects of politics in education, Marshall (1995: 369) maintains:

It is knowledge that permits statements to emerge and be legitimated as truth.  
It is power produced by power and in turn produces power.

Teacher Shari believed that the school the other children went to was better than the one that she went to because “*they knew so much more than I did*” and it was a “*white Afrikaans school*”. The utterances also provide a sense of the lived experiences of apartheid, which still has an impact on democratic South Africa. Power/knowledge was located within this regime of truth where Teacher Shari legitimated white, Afrikaans schools as better *because they knew so much more than I did* and it was a *white, Afrikaans school*. Even after more than two decades into democracy, Teacher Shari had internalised the hegemonic practices of the apartheid government by believing that white was better. Dornbrack (2008) argues that even though apartheid has been abolished, discourses of white superiority continue to surface especially in desegregated schools.

Teacher Shari believed that the other children could speak Afrikaans better than she did:

*they were learning all these things in their homes and at school. I never learnt how to speak Afrikaans in the same way that these children learnt ...they only spoke Afrikaans in their homes so their Afrikaans was very good*

This utterance points to the significance that Teacher Shari placed on “*learning these things in their homes and at school*”. She recognised that there was a difference between how she was taught in her home and in her school. Her utterance “*I never learnt to speak Afrikaans in the same way that these children learnt*” can be regarded as an implicit devaluing of her home language and literacy based knowledge and practices (Rogers, 2007). Barton and Hamilton (2000: 207) argue

that that there is a tendency to focus on the lack of literacy in the home as “a deficit model, which concentrates on what children and families lack rather than examining their strengths”

Foucault (1980: 39) emphasises that “power reaches into the very grain of individuals...inserts itself into their actions and attitudes, their discourses, learning processes and everyday lives”. As Teacher Shari said:

*My mother did help me a little bit but her Sesotho was better than her Afrikaans...maybe that is why I still failed Grade R.*

Within this context, being literate in the dominant language (Afrikaans) transformed “concrete individuals into subjects by asserting them into practices governed by rituals, so that they recognise the existing state of affairs, their subjection to it and the good that comes from its functioning all by themselves” (Guardiola-Rivera, 2002:16). The words *maybe that is why I still failed Grade R* is an example of her subjection to the domination of Afrikaans as a language of power. Teacher Shari constructed her subjectivity in relation to the children who could speak Afrikaans. She attributed her failure in Grade R to the fact that her mother’s Afrikaans was not as good as her Sesotho. As a dominant language, Afrikaans reflects a regime of truth where knowledge and power intersected to marginalise vernacular Sesotho literacy as partial and inadequate.

However, becoming literate within the South African context is not one-dimensional or linear but is fraught with tensions and contradictions. Becoming literate requires one to take up different discourses that are available at different moments in time in order to be legitimated as literate. Foucault (1980: 294; 295) tells us that power relations mutually constitute and have the potential to be repressive or productive. Those “who recognise the relation of power in which they are involved...[might] decide to resist them or escape them”. Knowing how to speak Afrikaans reveals a technology of power, which “determine[d] the conduct of individuals and submit[ted] them to certain ends or domination, an objectivising of the subject” (Foucault, 1988: 18). Afrikaans as a dominant language form required a change in Teacher Shari’s subject positioning from a Sesotho home language speaker to an Afrikaans speaker. Accordingly, Teacher Shari constituted herself as a subject in the different ways in

which she negotiated the different possibilities that existed within the different language discourses at play. She knew that in order to be recognised as a legitimate literate learner, she needed to know the dominant language and that meant devaluing her home language.

By strategically conforming to dominant language practices of Afrikaans, she was taking agency for her own learning by aligning herself to the language of power. Giroux (1992) claims that dominated actors are often aware of the power relationships and are able to consciously make decision about their actions within those relationships including appropriation of dominant discourse and practices. This survival mechanism enabled Teacher Shari to work “with the grain’ to fit...[herself] into sanctioned territories” in order to be legitimated as a literate learner (Cumming, Sumsion & Wong, 2013: 231). One can also argue that rather than devaluing her home language, she intentionally resisted conforming to home language instruction by “working against the grain” (Ibid: 2013: 231) to resist subordination to home language instruction which she perceived to be inferior to Afrikaans. Teacher Shari’s subjectivity was thus contingent upon and constructed based on a “social negotiation of the relations of power” at that particular moment in time (Holstein & Gubrium, 2011:344).

Teacher Shari recognised the way in which language and power operated in education:

*We spoke Sesotho at home but if my mother was helping me with my counting or the words that I had to learn, she would do this in Afrikaans. My grandmother would read Afrikaans books to me...the books that we got from school.*

The statements “*we spoke Sesotho at home but if my mother was helping me with my counting or the words that I had to learn, she would do this in Afrikaans*” show how Teacher Shari had internalised linguistic ideologies that entrenched “parallel monolingualism” where Afrikaans and Sesotho operated side by side with distinct social and academic functions, thereby privileging Afrikaans as the language for learning (Blackledge & Creese, 2010: 215). She believed that Afrikaans was the language for learning and Sesotho was the language for communication within the

social space of the family and thus had limited value. Within this space, Afrikaans was positioned as the legitimate language of the classroom and for learning.

During Teacher Shari's apprenticeship into the discourse of becoming literate, she learnt about the expected roles of the teacher and learner and expected ways of becoming literate. During the sessions of playing school, the child/teacher would tell them to "*do what I am doing and we would count after her or sort out the shapes*". From this she learnt that literacy required being docile - doing "*what I do*" which required an 'articulation and instantiation of bodily discipline' (Luke, 1992: 119). Teacher Shari's understandings of the construction of literacy were based on the regulation of the literate body/mind, which required one to do what one is told. Within this relation of power, Teacher Shari believed that in doing what she was told to do, she *learnt a lot*. Later on in the interview she talked about a literate child as one who is able *to do what I tell them to do*. As Foucault argues "power exists only when put into action" as "it brings into play relationships between individuals (or between groups)" (1982: 219, 217). She believed that she held the knowledge of what it meant to be literate which positioned her as the expert thereby giving her authority in the teacher-child relationship. Children, who could do what they were told to do, possessed the knowledge and were thus legitimated as literate.

#### **4.2.2 Becoming literate with parents**

The life world of Teacher Dee stood out quite distinctly from that of Teacher Shari. Teacher Dee's childhood experiences of becoming literate were directly situated within the daily and cultural practices of dominant monolingual, monocultural, middle-class, urban communities (Jones-Diaz, Arthur & Beecher, 2000):

*my mother and father...both read to me when I was little and then encouraged me to read on my own when I was older. We were allowed to sit around the table in the evenings and discuss things and....discuss your opinion; lots of reading... lots of going to the library; discussions about what the day had given us and what we had learnt through the day and storytelling with lots of dramatisation, lots of questions, lots of acting.*

Teacher Dee talked about her engagement with literacy as being about reading with others and on her own, discussing, giving opinions, asking questions, relating to

stories; taking knowledge from books, going to the library etc. Lareau (2000, 2003) maintains that middle-class families have an interdependent relationship with schools as their literacy practices; daily routines and organised activities are closely aligned with school literacy practices. Heath (1983:52) concurs by saying that a “deep continuity between patterns of socialisation and language learning in the home culture and what goes on at school” exists in middle-class contexts. Through repeated literacy events in supervised circumstances in the home, Teacher Dee began to understand what counted procedurally as literacy (Unsworth, 1988). By participating in literacy events such as reading, writing listening, speaking, play, role-play, drama, discussions of visual signs and symbols, reading, discussing and other activities, Teacher Dee learnt the signs, forms and functions of literacy in dynamic interaction with competent, literate others in her home.

Teacher Dee’s family literacy practices were based on the autonomous literacy discourse where literacy was constructed as a skill with clearly defined individual attributes (Street, 1984). The statements, *I was encouraged to read on my own; discuss things; discuss your opinions, going to library* etc. are examples of how Teacher Dee’s parents’ enactments of literacy practices enabled her to become enculturated into legitimated school discourses of what counted as school literacy. Reading, discussing, going to the library, asking questions etc. and displaying the correct bodily dispositions are symbolic of “literacy competence associated with school achievement and school success” (Nichols, 2002: 124). By providing a stimulating literacy home environment, engaging in conversations, book reading, using complex verbal utterances such as discussions, questioning, giving opinions, Teacher Dee’s parents engaged in what Lareau (2003) called *concerted cultivation*, a strategy of deliberating facilitating her literacy development. To further legitimate school literacy practices, her parents continuously displayed the correct bodily dispositions of what it meant to be school literate:

*my parents were always reading. My dad would read the newspapers and he loved reading murder mysteries. My mom was always reading – whatever she could lay her hands on....my mother always belonged to book groups.*

Teacher Dee’s parents saw themselves as adjunct teachers where they were involved in teaching school-related literacy skills:

*my parents believed that they had to be actively involved in my learning because they were always asking us what we did at school...it was a kind of revision of what we did...They wanted us to learn and do well in school. We were allowed to sit around the table in the evenings and discuss things. Literacy meant fun There was lots of dramatisation...lots of questions, lots of acting everything out. Lots of charades, lots of playing, lots of involvement.*

From the above statements it is evident that Teacher Dee's parents believed that if they were actively involved in their learning, they would do well at school. As adjunct teachers, Teacher Dee's parents ensured that she was schooled before schooling in ways that gave her privileged access to kinds of literacy practices in schools (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990). For example, family engagement tools such as reading storybooks, revising work done at school, discussions, dramatisation, questioning etc. were used to build school literacy skills thereby enabling her become schooled before schooling. These discourses of 'domestic literacy work' situated within developmentally and pedagogically appropriate practices re-affirmed and reproduced Teacher Dee's middle-class perceptions, thoughts and actions of what it meant to be literate (Robbins, 2004). These taken-for-granted assumptions and regimes of truth worked to shape to her literacy practices. When asked if her earliest experiences of literacy had influenced her understandings of what it meant to be literate, she responded by saying:

*I think so because books, talking, asking questions, discussing, learning through play, drama... and all those other things in my home were made to be fun. I read stories to them [children], we talk about the stories, we talk about things that are happening at home or at school...those sorts of things you know.*

These early experiences had an important influence on Teacher Dee's practice because it defined and produced what was known about literacy and how different aspects of literacy could be talked about. These beliefs created regimes of truth that worked to regulate her literacy practices, which were closely aligned to school literacy practices as she "*read[s] stories to them [children], we talk about the stories, we talk about things that are happening at home or at school...those sorts of things you know*". It also reveals how school literacy and middle-class family literacy

practices intersect to construct middle-class ways of knowing and doing literacy as the ideal. Power was assigned to middle-class literacy practices, which worked to marginalise and silence individual family histories and diverse socio-economic, cultural and ethnic ways of knowing and doing literacy. This contributed to the normalisation of middle class-family and its association with developmentally and pedagogically appropriate practices (Walkerdine & Lucey, 1989).

From the teachers' statements I was able to identify the way in which the teachers constructed literacy as a social practice in ECC for 3-4 year old children. The teachers constructed literacy as a skill, which was essentially about listening, speaking, reading and writing. This dominant discourse of literacy as a skill had its roots in the teachers' childhood experiences of playing school and becoming literate with parents. As Cook-Gumperz maintains, "our conceptions of literacy are inseparable from the specific circumstances of the historical context" (2006: 21). These constructions of literacy as a skill created regimes of truth that worked to produce the subjectivity of the early childhood teachers as they had knowledge about what constituted literacy. This knowledge was an indicator of their expertise, which worked to construct the subjectivity of the good early childhood teacher. In the next section, I look at how the teachers utterances enabled "rules or forms to become manifest", that worked to produce the subjectivity of the good teacher (Foucault, 1972: 99, 49).

### **4.3 The good teacher**

In South Africa, early childhood education has gained extensive recognition as important for providing children with the best possible start in life (DoBE, 2005, 2009; DoSD, 2006). Early childhood policy documents call for a workforce that is well trained, knows about child development and knows how to plan for stimulating learning environments for the holistic development of young children (DoBE, 2009). These policy discourses worked to constitute the subjectivity of the teacher as 'good' if they had knowledge of early childhood development and planning for the different needs of young children. The discourse of the good teacher was [re]produced in the training and the teaching experiences of the teachers.

### 4.3.1 Training as a constructor of the good teacher

In the early childhood teachers' talk there were substantial discussions around their role. Through their talk, the teachers worked to define their subjectivity as early childhood teachers based on the knowledge that they had acquired during their training and teaching experience. The teachers in the study had different qualifications and this was a direct result of the educational opportunities afforded to them. Teacher Dee had a post-graduate qualification in Speech and Drama and English and a one-year diploma in early childhood education. The diploma focused on early childhood development, curriculum planning and developmentally appropriate practices:

*we learnt about how children develop and how to stimulate them, how to be passionate about what you do...lots of practical stuff like planning for different kinds of activities...you need to know what their needs and interests are ...they need objects, they need to be busy; they need to be able to talk to each other, play with each other and learn from playing together.*

Teacher Shari fell pregnant before she could complete her school qualification. She completed a two-week training course organised by the Department of Education where the focus was on the implementation of the Free State Early Childhood Curriculum for children from birth to 4 years of age. Her training emphasised programme skills and practices that were developmentally appropriate:

*you see...we learnt how to plan for the day...we must plan for theme teaching. We must plan for the morning and for group activities...that sort of thing...you must know who the child is, what is their age...what they like to do, what they need...be aware of where the child lives, who their parents are...you see...so we know how to help them.*

The statements “*we learnt about how children develop and how to stimulate them... planning for different kinds of activities...you need to know what their needs and interests are*” and “*you must know who the child is, what is their age...what they like to do, what they need*” situates the teachers' work within a framework of child development and developmentally appropriate practice discourse. Copple and Bredekamp (2009) argue that the training of early childhood professionals must

include knowledge about child development theory, learning, the curricula and teaching practices that are informed by this knowledge. I maintain that these training programmes were based on literature using “children from the Western world that have psychologised and biologised younger human beings, creating the universal conditions of childhood” (Cannella, 1997: 37). For example, Teacher Shari was trained on how to implement the Free State Curriculum, which was developed by the University of Leuven in collaboration with the South African Department of Education. The curriculum is framed within child development discourse with a focus on the children’s physical, cognitive, social and emotional well-being and involvement. Key milestones are outlined for the different stages of children’s development. These milestones assume predetermined truths of children, their growth and development and the kinds of programmes that had to be put into place to ensure the construction of this normal, universal child (Cannella, 1999; Burman, 2008).

I argue that the training programmes that both the teachers participated in were developed from conceptually limiting development theories, which focused on generic milestones based on the Western, middle-class child. These ways of thinking exclude the majority of South African children and the social, cultural and economic contexts within which young children live. However, given that at the time of this study there was no formal national curriculum for children from birth to 4 years of age apart from the NELDS (DoBE, 2009), the training that the teachers received gave them something to work from in the light of nothing else in place. This training provided them with knowledge of how children develop, how children learn and ‘best’ practices to support this learning and development. Consequently, power resided in the early childhood teachers’ training and this produced the subjectivity of the ‘good’ teacher because they had knowledge of child development, how children learn and developmentally appropriate practice.

From the utterances, one can also argue that the teachers’ training had constructed them as “possessing a single, normative identity” that was decontextualised from the context within which practice was enacted (Langford, 2007: 333). This single, normative, universal identity reveals how the power relations between the trainers and the teachers became “naturalised” based on an understanding that this

“knowledge was universal” (Langford, 2007: 350). Cultural beliefs were obscured and perceived to be universal and unproblematic in the training. For Teacher Dee, the training validated her middle-class ways of being as her subjectivity was in congruence with training that she received. On the other hand, Teacher Shari’s racial and language subjectivity was marginalised in her training. Teacher Shari says that the training she received was all in English and they were told, “*we must know how to speak English because we are going to teach in English*”. She further stated “*every day I am getting better with the English...but sometimes I switch to Sesotho or Afrikaans*”. This has implications for early childhood preparation programmes. In working towards educational equity and access for all in early childhood education, training programmes need to focus on who the early childhood teacher is, the kinds of linguistic and social capital they bring to the context and how this impacts on practice. Silencing diversity in training masks the “differences in power behind all diversities” and is likely to further marginalise teachers in the classroom (Maher, 2001: 23).

Both teachers conceptualised their work as a preparation phase, readying the children for the specific demands of compulsory schooling (Moss, 2013):

*Teacher Dee: ...I also think that you need to know what the child needs to be able to cope in Grade R.*

*Teacher Shari: ...the child must be able to do certain things so that they will know what to do in school.*

The statements reveal how the teachers’ training connected with knowledge of child development, school readiness and developmentally appropriate practice. The minimum standards for early childhood teachers in South Africa require that teachers have an understanding of early childhood development, show an interest in the child, enjoy being with the child, be patient, caring and develop programmes that are safe and stimulating for the young child (DoSD, 2006). From the teachers’ utterances one is able to make sense of how their training intersected with the minimum standards required by the DoSD (2006) to construct the subjectivity of a ‘good early childhood teacher. A good early childhood teacher is one who:

- knows how children develop in terms of their age;

- is passionate about teaching;
- knows the needs, interests;
- gets the child ready for school;
- loves children; and
- is a mother.

The above qualities provide a means of identifying a 'good' early childhood teacher and the mode of action that was needed to construct a literate subject. Child-centred and developmentally appropriate practices such as child development, knowing the needs and interests, getting children ready for school etc. were the vehicle through which the literate subject was constructed. In the next section, I explore how the training that the teacher received was implicated in the discursive formation of the 'good' teacher. I explore two constructions of a 'good' early childhood teacher: the teacher as an expert and the teacher as a surrogate mother. Exploring the discursive formation of a 'good' teacher in this way required an understanding of what and how the good teacher was understood. These understandings became regimes of truth, which enabled the teachers to take up different subject positionings.

#### **4.3.1.1 The teacher as an expert**

Knowing about how children develop and developmentally appropriate practices that enhance literacy learning became normalising devices that enabled the teachers to take up the subject positioning as the expert. This knowledge provided a platform from which to speak thereby giving legitimacy to the role as the 'expert'. By claiming this knowledge as legitimate the teachers advanced what was needed for the young child to be legitimated as a literate learner. Whilst this knowledge gave the teachers a platform from which to speak, this knowledge base also relegated the role of the teacher to that of a technician. As a technician, the teachers needed to have knowledge and skills and adopt a "more developmental and educational role" that required an application of "defined set of technologies through regulated processes to produce pre-specific outcomes" (Moss, 2006: 357):

Teacher Shari: *"I learnt how to plan for the day...plan for theme teaching...plan for the morning and for group activities...that sort of thing. They told us to watch the child all the time to see if he can do the work...we need to know how the child grows and learns...children learn in different*

*ways...we must know that. Also the child must be able to do certain things at this age.*

*Teacher Dee: we learnt about how children develop and how to stimulate them, how to be passionate about what you do...but lots of practical stuff like planning for different kinds of activities...you need to know what their needs and interests are...this will help in your planning.*

The role of the teachers as technical experts was foregrounded as their training provided them with technologies that included “working with...practical guidelines...and using observation and other methods to assess performance against developmental norms” (Langford, 2010: 291; Moss, 2006: 35). Child development norms operated as regimes of truth about what children should be able to do at a particular stage of their development. These normalising devices worked to produce the teacher as an expert with technical knowledge of planning and assessment acquired through child development and developmentally appropriate practice discourse.

The discourse of literacy as skill and the teacher as a technical expert collided to produce the good teacher. As outlined in Section 4.2, both the teachers constructed literacy as being about the development of autonomous skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing. To ensure that children acquired these skills, the teachers needed technical skills and competencies such as knowing how to ‘*plan for the day, plan for theme teaching, plan for children of this age, plan for different kinds of activities based on needs and interests*’ and measured children’s achievements through observation and against measurable outcomes of what it meant to be literate. The teachers’ statements show how their literacy planning processes and ways of assessing children’s literacy achievements were validated against the ‘scientificity’ of child development and developmentally appropriate practices (Lather & Moss, 2005). This knowledge assigned power to the teachers thereby allowing them to take up the subject positioning of the expert.

This power/knowledge nexus enabled the teachers to objectify and classify children against the norms of child development:

Teacher Shari: *They told us to watch the child all the time to see if he can do the work.*

Teacher Dee: *Most of my children are second language learners. I have organised extra English classes for them. We have a speech therapist who helps learners who have problems with speech...the children at this age are supposed to be able to speak quite clearly so that we can understand what they are saying. We also do monkeynastics...this is for children who need to develop their gross motor and fine motor skills.*

The utterances point to the assumption that all children pass through the same stages of development and that one can fix any kind of perceived deficit within the child through observation, the provision of extra English classes, speech therapy, monkeynastics etc. The construction and practice of assessment of children was a way of objectifying the literate child through observation, measurement and judgements. As a technician, the teachers had knowledge of what it meant to be literate and how to assess children against the norm of child development and developmentally appropriate practice. Assessment thus became a means through which their power and subject positioning as the expert could be legitimated. Whilst this knowledge was limiting as it constructed all children as passing through the same stages of development and promoted a one-size fits all practice, it provided the teachers with a platform from which to speak. This knowledge gave authority to the teachers' subject positioning as experts thus legitimating their subjectivity as good early childhood teachers.

One needs to look at how the ECC operated to construct the role of the teacher as an expert. The services for early childhood care and education in my study were supplied by private organisations for profit. The centres operated like a marketable commodity where the parents as consumers had the right to exercise their choices they assumed would best provide their children with the skills to become literate. To be competitive, successful and sustainable, the early childhood centre needed to know what worked. Drawing on child development, skills needed for getting children ready for school and developmentally appropriate practices became the means to this end (Moss, 2013). The teachers were also required to apply these technologies to their practices. To ensure that the teachers were "working within the grain" of the

centre, the teachers were subjected to different technologies of power to regulate what they did and how they did what they did (Cumming et al., 2013:):

Teacher Shari: *Teacher Thelma tells us what to teach. Sometimes Teacher Thelma (the principal) gets some retired teachers to come and show us how to teach something like counting or numbers.*

Teacher Dee: *The teachers [from the Pre-school and Foundation Phase] tell us what they want the children to be able to do and what they need to know.*

Technologies of power such as telling them what to teach, what children should be able to do and know and getting retired teachers to show them what to teach, enabled the early childhood centre to regulate what the teachers were doing thereby [re]producing the image of the good early childhood centre. By willing to do what they were told, the teachers were able to construct their subjectivity as good, as it was based on the scientificity of child development and developmentally appropriate practice knowledge.

#### **4.3.1.2 The teacher as surrogate mother**

Maternalist discourses have significantly influenced early childhood policy and practice (Ailwood, 2008). Their influence is manifested in the theories that refer to mothers as 'natural' primary carers of children; the mostly female early childhood workforce and the continued policy link between women's workforce participation and ECD provision. For example, in South Africa, the government has earmarked ECD as a route for women's employment and empowerment where 99% of the workforce in ECD are women at present (Porteus, 2004, September; du Toit; Kvalsvic & Koopman, 2006, Ebrahim, 2014).

Teacher Shari spoke about how her training had constructed her as a mother: "we were told about having love and caring for the child...be a mother to them". The notion of caring is also evident in the first paragraph of the Children's Act where care is referred to as "providing the child with guidance, direction and securing the child's education and upbringing" through the provision of "structure, services and means for promoting and monitoring sound physical, psychological, intellectual and social development of children" (Republic of South Africa, 2005).

The notion of caring positioned Teacher Shari's work within the dominant discourse of developmentally appropriate and child-centred practice where her role was to cater for the needs of young children (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009; Gestwicki, 2013). Copple and Bredekamp (2009) portray teachers who teach children between the ages of 3 to 5 as being warm, gentle, supportive, responsive, patient, encouraging and facilitating child development and learning. As suggested by Moss (2006), the notion of caring generates a particular understanding of ECE as an extension of the home where the early childhood teacher is seen as a surrogate mother who requires qualities and competencies that are innate to women or acquired through women's practice of domestic work.

In constructing herself as a surrogate mother, Teacher Shari was behaving in an ethical and moral way. Foucault (1997) argues that ethics of the self involve the moral conduct that is a self-forming technology, which relates to the kind of being we aspire to be when we behave in a moral way. Ethical conduct therefore consists of actions we take and capacities we exercise intentionally for the purpose of engaging in morally approved conduct (Robson, n.d.). Having "*love and caring for the child*" and being "*a mother to them*" is an example of the ethics of the self or a self-forming technology (Foucault, 1997). Self-forming technologies such as being supportive, nurturing, caring and responding to the needs of children in her care reveal the actions she took (*being a mother to them*) and capacities she exercised (*being loving and caring*). In addition, the home circumstances of the children also worked to produce her subject positioning as a surrogate mother:

*You must be a mother to them...some of them don't have mothers and fathers. They live with their grandparents or aunts. I have three children like that. I make sure that they have something to eat. They [the children] mean everything to me... I always tell them that when they are here, I am their mother.*

The above statements reveal the actions that Teacher Shari took to exercise her role as surrogate mother – "*I make sure that they have something to eat. They [the children] mean everything to me... I always tell them that when they are here, I am their mother.*" The statements also describe how Teacher Shari felt about her work. The statements, '*some of them don't have mothers and fathers*' and '*I always*

*tell them that when they are here, I am their mother'* show, how in the absence of family care, a dyadic mother-child relationship was developed between the teacher as surrogate mother and the child (Singer, 1993). In South Africa, the proportion of children living with both their parents decreased from 39% in 2002 to 35% in 2012. Thirty nine percent (39%) of children live with their mothers while 3% live with their fathers. Twenty three percent (23%) of children have neither of their biological parents who live with them. Dahlberg and Moss (2005:2) maintain that ECD needs to be understood as spaces of "ethical and political practices". Teacher Shari was thus being responsive to the localising, shifting and changing nature of the socio-political context within which she worked. In taking up the subject positioning as a surrogate mother, Teacher Shari was being critically agentic by "engaging with the problems that deeply concern students in their everyday lives" (Giroux, 1997: 10). Her responsiveness to the rights and needs of children to feel safe, secure and love can be construed as Teacher Shari's contribution to the promotion of equity and social justice in early childhood education and care.

The statements "*I make sure that they have something to eat*" and "*I am their mother*" also point to how the image of the early childhood teacher as a surrogate mother is both "gendered and requires qualities that are innate to women's maternal instincts" (Moss, 2006: 34). The qualities of nurturing and caring created regimes of truth or what (1990) calls 'gender regimes'. In South Africa, the early childhood education sector has been reserved as a space for enhancing women's employment, education and empowerment through subsidised learnerships and the Expanded Public Works Programme (September et al., 2006; Altman, 2008). The training programme that Teacher Shari completed formed part of the government's strategic employment plan through the Expanded Public Works Programme. Policy documents on early childhood education refer to teachers as women, are gender neutral or never explicitly refer to men in these roles (See: Department of Education, 2005; 2010).

These understandings are based on the science of attachment theory (Singer, 1993; Berk, 2009) where the belief is that a mother is needed for the secure development of young children. Attachment theory together with maternalism thus work to create 'gender regimes' which effectively typecast women as being more suitable for this

type of work and render men unsuitable (Connell, 1990; Petersen, 2014). The discourses in policy documents thus reflect and perpetuate the status quo in the field where education and employment is structured to [re]produce gendered workforces, which views ECE as primarily women's work (Moss, 2006). These gender regimes thus gave Teacher Shari a "moral authority and the role of caregiver" in the private space of the early childhood centre (Langford, 2010: 296). Her role as a surrogate mother was further legitimated to achieve larger public goods viz. the government's strategic employment plan.

Foucault's (1982) concept of pastoral power reveals the productive nature of power that worked to produce Teacher Shari as a surrogate mother. Teacher Shari's utterances reflect this where she says, "...we were told about having love and caring for the child...be a mother to them" which allowed her through her conduct to behave in an ethical and moral way. In terms of Foucault's (1980) societal technology of power, policy documents and the training programme regulated Teacher Shari's behaviour and her work. Her subjectivity was thus normalised through official authorisation, which acted as a technology of self (Foucault, 1988). Teacher Shari had internalised her subjectivity as surrogate mother through self-surveillance producing self-discipline of action, practice and subjectivity. The circulatory nature of pastoral power was evident as Teacher Shari allowed power to be exercised on her by being *a mother to them* as well as treating the *learners in my class in the same way...as my child*. Thus, the totalising nature of pastoral power was also prevalent as Teacher Shari allowed herself to be constructed as a surrogate mother by choosing to be a surrogate mother and treating the children in class as her own.

#### **4.3.2 Personal experience as a constructor of the good teacher**

Teacher Dee spoke about how her teaching experiences had helped her become a 'good' early childhood teacher. She acknowledged that whilst her training provided her with knowledge about child development curriculum planning and developmentally appropriate practice, her teaching experience had provided her with *insider* knowledge about teaching and learning in the early years:

*...the only time you actually learn how to teach young children is when you are actually teaching ...and working with young children.*

Teacher Dee had developed a sense of consciousness of the material circumstances of her everyday experiences to make sense of what she did. Teacher Dee's earliest experiences of literacy, her education and training intersected with her experiences at the early childhood centre to construct the 'good' early childhood teacher:

*books, talking, having conversation, reading, asking questions... and all those other things in my home were made to be fun and not just homework. I try to do the same for the children in my class. I try to make learning enjoyable for my children in the class...I read stories to them, we talk about the stories, we talk about things that are happening at home or at school...those sorts of things you know.*

*[in my training]...we learnt about how children develop and how to stimulate them, how to be passionate about what you do....but lots of practical stuff like planning for different kinds of activities.*

*from experience I have learnt how children develop...emotionally, socially, and physically and so on,... [and knowing] what the child needs to be able to cope in Grade R and in the Foundation Phase'.*

Foucault (1995:138) describes this as:

A multiplicity of often minor processes, of different origin and scattered location, which overlap, repeat, or imitate on another, support one another, distinguish themselves from one another according to their domain of application, converge and gradually produce the blueprint of a general method.

Her experiences, first as a learner and later an early childhood teacher converged to produce a blueprint for what constituted a 'good' early childhood teacher. A 'good' early childhood teacher was one who had knowledge of child development, what constituted literacy and how to get the child ready for school. This power/knowledge nexus became regimes of truth that determined how Teacher Dee constructed children, learning and teaching at the centre.

Teacher Dee talked about how she had *learnt from experience and trial and error*. *You try something and if it doesn't work try something else*. This strategy of 'seeing what works and trial and error can be equated to Foucault's (1977) metaphor of the panopticon, which he used to describe how power and surveillance operate in modern society. For example, Teacher Dee has internalised the "regulatory gazes that conveyed an underlying trust" in her capacity for making decisions about teaching and learning (Cumming, et al., 2013: 229). Once this regulatory gaze had been internalised, she was continuously involved a process of self-regulation and self-surveillance through *trial and error* and *trying something else if it doesn't work*. Self-regulation and self-surveillance guaranteed that Teacher Dee stayed on the "right side of the self-demarcated and regulatory fence" by working within the 'grain' of developmentally appropriate practice and school readiness (Brown and Sumsion, 2007: 30). Failure to work on the 'right side of the regulatory fence' might lead to perceptions that Teacher Dee was inadequate or lacking in self-restraint and mastery (Foucault, 1990). Consequently, Teacher Dee possessed knowledge that has been co-constructed and negotiated with other teachers at the centre and the Foundation Phase teachers at the primary school:

*At the beginning of the year the teachers from the Foundation Phase and all the other teachers at the centre meet together. The teachers tell us what they want the children to be able to do and what they need to know. This helps us with our planning. We know that the child needs to be ready for Grade R or Grade 1...so we plan what we each need to do to help the child to learn* (informal discussion: 07/05/2013).

Teacher Dee exercised her authority by making decisions and judgements about which practices would enhance the literate development of the child. These judgements and decisions were based on conformity to the dominant discourse of school readiness and child development. The statement *the teachers tell us what they want the children to be able to do and what they need to know* reveals the power relations that existed between the teachers at the centre and the teachers in the Foundation Phase. These workplace hierarchies and regulatory regimes" constructed the teacher as being 'good' if they conformed to the hegemonic discourse of school readiness and child development (Garavaso, 2007: 67). The

statement *this helps us with our planning* reveals how Teacher Dee had constructed herself as a subject. By conforming to dominant discourses and subjectivities as set out by “others in the prevailing institutional story of the workplace”, Teacher Dee was legitimated as good (Cumming, et.al, 2013: 230).

In this section, I showed how the training and teaching experiences of the teachers worked to produce the subjectivity of the good ECD teacher. I looked at how the training that the teachers received enabled the teachers to take up the subject positioning as an expert and surrogate mother. The experiences of Teacher Dee and the context within she worked also worked to further produce the image of the good ECD teacher.

In the next section, I explore how the teachers positioned children along the continuum of child development and on the road to eventually becoming school ready.

#### **4.4 The becoming child**

An analysis of semi-structured interview texts showed that the literate child was constructed in a particular way with specific skills and competencies as well as visible sign systems, which were couched in the dominant discourses of child development and readiness. The discourses of the developing nature of the child and readiness traditionally positioned the child as becoming and incomplete in opposition to the adult as a finished being (Lee, 2001), which located the child in an unequal social position to adults (Cannella, 1999). Consequently, a child was constructed as being ready for learning and for school if he/she possessed certain knowledge and skills for their developmental age and conformed to expected and predicted subjectivities and characteristics of the school environment (Evans, 2013). An analysis of the semi-structured interviews revealed the construction of an ideal literate child as one who:

- can sit and finish the work that they have to do;
- pays attention;
- sits still;
- is an independent little body;
- speaks quite clearly so that we can understand what they are saying;

- pronounces words clearly;
- knows phonics...their sounds to be able to speak clearly;
- learns through play;
- can count to ten;
- sings songs;
- recites poems;
- knows colours and shapes;
- can cut and paste;
- says their bible verses;
- answers questions;
- listens;
- looks at pictures and talks about what he sees;
- is able to use language in a particular way with other children and adults;
- can communicate what he feels;
- can express himself/herself;
- uses vocabulary to communicate; and
- picks up vocabulary incidentally.

The above utterances enabled certain “rules or forms...to become manifest” thereby constituting “the objects of which they speak” viz. the becoming literate subject/child (Foucault, 1972:99, 49). The teachers’ constructions of how a literate child should look and act emphasised outputs and reduced literacy to a set of autonomous skills. For example, a literate child was one who could sit still, pay attention, answer questions, communicate etc. This educational knowledge of how a literate child should look and act worked as a “technology of production” by putting into place “practical grids of specification for diagramming, classifying and categorising” the literate child/subject (Foucault, 1988:18; 1972: 42). A literate child/subject was thus constructed as one who was able to procedurally display oral, written and bodily indicators such as sitting still, paying attention, uses vocabulary to communicate etc. (Unsworth, 1988; 2001).

The construction of the literate subject shows how discourses collide to produce the image of the becoming child viz. the becoming school ready literate child. Two discourses were located in the teachers' talk: child development and readiness that worked to construct the becoming child (developing but not yet fully developed).

#### **4.4.1 Child development**

Child development discourse structures our understandings and conceptions of children in early childhood education (Cannella, 1997; Baker, 1998; Burman, 2008; Moss, 2012). Burman (2008) maintains that there are established ideas about the becoming child in early childhood education, which are characterised by an entrenched and unquestioning adherence to developmentalism. Developmentalism is a way of reasoning about humanity that was taken up in formal education in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century (Burman, 2008). It offered a view of individuals in which new abilities and proficiencies were thought to unfold in set steps or acquired through a series of stages (Baker, 1998). In South Africa child development discourse is afforded weight by different policy documents (See: Department of Basic Education: 2001, 2005, Department of Basic Education & Unicef, 2009, Department of Social Development, 2006). The image of the becoming child is further produced through early childhood services and programmes that calls for ECD services that cater for the child's "emotional, social, intellectual, spiritual and moral development and to use play as the vehicle for achieving this. The opportunities that children are offered must meet the children's needs at their particular stage of development" (Department of Basic Education, 2001: 39-40). This developmental discourse is given further weight by the following utterances of the teachers:

*Teacher Dee: I believe that children at this age learn best in this way. All their senses are stimulated when you use art, music, song...stories to help children to learn...[you must know] what their needs are, what they enjoy doing...their interests.*

*Teacher Shari: (we must) know who the child is, what is their age... what they like to do, what they need...*

As a technology of production (Foucault, 1988), the 'scientificity' of child development knowledge assigned power to the teachers and gave them a privileged

right from which to speak (Lather & Moss, 2005). Power was assigned to the early childhood teacher whose role was to ensure that the child acquired the knowledge and skills needed for that particular stage of development. Both the teachers believed that their role was to develop the oral literacy skills of the children in their care. This belief was based on the perception that age was related to reading development:

*Teacher Dee: Children in my class are too small to read, so you have to read to them. They cannot really tell you what is in the story, so you have to read to them. I think it is only when a child starts reading that they are able to talk about the story.*

*Teacher Shari: They can't read now. I read to them.*

The utterances point to the belief that being literate was about reading the word and that children of this age were incapable of reading on their own. These 'regimes of truth' were based on child development discourse where a skilled literate child is one who grows and develops in stages (Foucault, 1977). Consequently, children have to first develop oral literacy skills, as they were not yet ready for reading and writing. This ordering of progression can be linked to child development theory where each element of development builds on each other. For example, in a critique of Piaget's work, Cleverly and Phillips (1986: 87) explain:

The most famous aspect of Piaget's theory was also heavily biological in conception—he divided development into a number of stages and even suggested rough age ranges for each. He was clear that child growth was a continuous process; the stages were not as discrete as, for example the stages of an insect.

The utterances "*but they can't read now*" and "*they cannot really tell you what is in the story*" reveal how the teachers assumed that development precedes literacy. The assumption that children were too small to read is an indication of how the child was classified as deficit and not capable of making meaning of different kinds of texts. This classification was based on the belief that all children develop and grow in a linear fashion through universal ages and stages (Popkewitz & Bloch, 2001). Stern (2000) holds that children as young as three are able to develop their narrative

self. By assuming that children were too young to read, the teachers disregarded how children see themselves as part of the story or how the story related to their everyday lives. The statements of the teachers also show how child development discourse connects with developmentally appropriate practice discourse to construct the image of the becoming child.

The statements because “*I have to read to them*” and “*I have to teach them how to write and draw and you have to read to them*” determined the kinds of developmentally appropriate teaching and learning experiences required for children to become literate – story reading, teaching them how to write and draw. Power/knowledge was assigned to the teacher, as she was the expert who could guide children towards achieving basic skills thereby normalising the subjectivity of the becoming child. This unequal relation of power shows how children’s engagement and participation were relegated to the learning and development of specific skills that would help them become ready for learning or for school. The assumption that all children can achieve the same level of development and all children go through the same developmental milestones constitutes a universal condition of children and childhood (Cannella, 1999; 2010). These universal truths silenced issues of diversity and reinforced unequal power relations based on language, race and social class. In addition, by classifying the child as deficit in relation to sameness in terms of child development, the teachers discounted the ways in which children actively made sense of literacy experiences in their homes and communities.

#### **4.4.2 Readiness**

The teachers believed that their role was to master the conventional language code so as to become school ready:

*Teacher Dee: I have taught them how to organise their thoughts...and made them into a whole little body to cope with the next stage in life...you know for Grade R.*

*Teacher Shari: I think that we must read a lot for our children so that they can listen and talk about the stories. You must show them how to read and write. They must do things in the class...they must be able to do what I tell them to*

*do...they must know what to do in the class so that they will know what to do in the next class.*

The statements point to how power and responsibility were allocated to the teachers because of their role in the development of the school ready child. The words “*I made them into a whole little body to cope with the next stage in life...you know for Grade R*” and “*they must be able to do what I tell them to do so they will know what to do in the next class*” drew attention to the teachers’ beliefs that their role and the object of literacy was to produce a school ready child. This construction of the image of the becoming school ready child reveals how through technologies of power, the teachers were able to “determine the conduct” of the literate child by inscribing particular “thoughts, conduct and ways of being” thereby “systematically form[ing] the objects of which they speak” (Foucault, 1972: 49; 1988:18). Power was assigned to the teachers because they believed that they had the knowledge of what constituted literacy – *being able to read, write, listen and speak*. This knowledge brought into effect the ‘normal’, docile, reading, writing, speaking and listening child. Within this context, the teacher was positioned as the expert and the child as an object who needed to be guided into becoming school ready. Under the “classificatory eye” of the teacher – “*I have taught them*” and “*they must be able to do what I tell them to do*”, children acquired listening, speaking, reading and writing skills that were considered important for becoming school ready (Foucault, 1977: 147). The school ready child was thus legitimated. In legitimating the school ready child, the teachers failed to recognise the potential that children had to contribute to their own learning. The statements also point to the silencing of knowledge, dispositions and values that children bring to the classroom generated in spaces outside of formal schooling (Comber, 2000; 2013; Manyak, 2004).

Both the teachers’ construction of the image of the child was based on the idealist/nativist and empiricist/environmental conception of the readiness (Meisels, 1999). An idealist/nativist conception of literacy sees readiness as a “phenomenon that occurs within the child” (Evans, 2013: 172). The belief is that children are considered ready for learning if they have acquired particular developmental capacities (Kagan, 2007). The empiricist/environmental conception of the readiness is constructed around the belief that there are certain knowledge, skills and

experiences children need to become ready for school (Brown, 2010). From my analysis of the semi-structured interviews, I came to the realisation that these two constructions of readiness do not exist in isolation. Rather, they intersected and impacted on one another to construct the image of the becoming child.

The idealist/nativist conception of readiness conceptualises literacy development as occurring within the child and “dependent on inherent, maturational processes” (Evans, 2013: 174). These understanding were evident in the following utterances of the teachers:

*Teacher Dee: [some] children have poor eye-hand co-ordination or have not developed fine motor skills...the children at this age are supposed to be able to speak quite clearly so that we can understand what they are saying.*

*Teacher Shari: Well...I think that he should be able to sit still and listen when I am talking. Also he must be able speak properly and be able to answer questions that I am asking him.*

The skills mentioned by the teachers: eye-hand co-ordination; speak clearly, sits still, listens and answers questions etc. are considered knowledge and skills that a child needs to legitimated as ready for learning. Within this context, children were considered ready for learning once they had acquired these individual developmental capacities. Examples of these included: pronounces words clearly; knows their phonics; answers questions; looks at pictures and can talk about what he/she sees etc.

The utterances of the teachers also revealed evidence of readiness within an empiricist/environmental framework. This understanding was based on the belief that readiness provided one with the necessary literacy knowledge, skills and learning experiences that were needed for formal schooling (Brown, 2010). Both teachers believed that their role was to provide particular learning experiences so that the children could become school ready. For example, the teachers planned for different kinds of learning experiences to get the child ready for school:

*Teacher Dee: [I] plan different kinds of activities...to prepare them for the next class.*

*Teacher Shari: I must make sure that they can do things in my class so that they know what to do in the next class. I plan my day like what I am going to do in the morning, what I am going to learn [teach] them for the day.*

“This specific notion of readiness was thus constructed as a normative developmental goal” (Evans, 2013: 176). Power was allocated to the teachers as this educational knowledge enabled them to rank and classify children. Consequently, children who had not acquired these ‘normative developmental goals’ were provided with extra educational experiences and explicit teaching to train and correct the individual:

*Teacher Dee: most of my children are second language learners. I have organised extra English classes for them. We have a speech therapist who helps learners who have problems with speech – the children at this age are supposed to be able to speak quite clearly so that we can understand what they are saying. We also do monkeynastics...this is for children who need to develop their gross motor and fine motor skills.*

*Teacher Shari: I show them how to colour and then they must copy my picture...I show them how to hold their crayons and they copy what I am doing. They must cut on the line and paste neatly on their page...and I observe each and every one of them, and when I see that there is a problem, I would help.*

Through surveillance and normalising judgements, the child was classified as becoming school ready once he/she was capable of performing certain activities like speaking in English, pronouncing words clearly, developing fine and gross motor skills, colouring, holding crayons correctly, cutting, pasting etc. Children were thus normalised if they “conform[ed] to a standard defining the normal” of what constituted a school ready literate child (Foucault, 1977:182). Normalising literate behaviour in terms of school readiness made it “possible to control both the disciplinary order of the body and the aleatory (temporal) events that occur in the biological multiplicity” (Ibid, 1977: 253). Normalising the becoming ready child enabled the teachers to make pedagogic judgements of children by “pinning down [of] each individual in his own particularity” (Foucault, 1997:192) - second language English speakers, children

who could not speak clearly, children who could not hold a crayon or could not colour etc. These judgements enabled the teacher to “fix[ing] individual differences” through speech therapy, extra English classes, demonstrations and children copying what the teacher had done (Foucault, 1997:191).

The discourse of readiness also points to the complex nature of the teachers’ work. Whilst the teachers’ beliefs and practices worked to normalise and regulate the becoming ready child, the teachers were also subjected to regulation and normalisation from the institution within which they worked:

*Teacher Shari: I get help from the other ladies who are teaching the 3 year old children...we all plan together...so we all teach the same thing. Teacher Thelma (the principal) also shows us what we must teach.*

*Teacher Dee: The teachers (Foundation Phase teachers) tell us what they want the children to be able to do and what they need to know (Informal discussion (07/05/2013)).*

Within this normative and performative regime, the choices that the teachers made for their practices were privileged and informed by the institution within which they worked. For example their planning processes and networks that they had set up were aligned to a “dominant narrative of normativity and performativity in which the purpose of education is conformity with predetermined performance criteria” – getting the child ready for school and learning (Moss, 2013: 5). Within these contexts, conformity to the hegemonic discourse of readiness legitimated their role as the expert, which worked to enhance their professionalism and status

In South Africa, the legitimation of readiness is also evident within political discourse and government commissioned reports where early intervention is considered important as it “substantially improve[s] cognitive ability and learner readiness for attainment of basic education” (Department of Basic Education: 2012:2). From this perspective readiness is seen as part of a linear process where children progressively move towards a threshold of readiness, which, once passed, enables children to “substantially improve[s] cognitive ability and learner readiness for attainment of basic education” (Ibid, 2012: 2). ECE is thus linked to a dominant discourse of readiness and child development that conceptualises ECE as a

preparatory phase for the demands of basic education. These discourses connect to construct the image of the becoming child

The teachers' constructions of the school ready and ready for learning child also point to how social class worked to [re]produce the becoming child. At the two centres, children had differential access to educational opportunities, social networks, and extracurricular activities and this was as a result of social class (See: Ball, 2013; Ball, Maguire, & Macrae, 2000; Lareau, 2000; Walkerdine, Lucey, & Melody, 2001). Middle-class children at Cheerful Tots had access to commodities such as extra English classes; speech therapists etc. to train, correct, classify and strengthen the normalising effect of the school ready child (Foucault, 1977). For children at Universal ECC, the material circumstances at the school and of the parents were social obstacles that made this access to extra educational opportunities quite difficult for the children at the centre. Teacher Shari had to therefore use her knowledge, skills and experiences to support literacy learning at the centre. Teacher Shari was under qualified and the material conditions in which she enacted her practice was a "space in which different but related norms are produced, responding-ecologically, to the local possibilities and limitations" (Blommaert, Muylleert, Huysmans & Dyers, 2005: 379). In responding to the limitations within the context, she provided support for literacy learning through repetition and observation:

*I observe each and every one of them, and when I see that there is a problem, I would help... I do the same thing over and over again and I show them. We do the same things over and over again like singing songs, poems...and other stuff.*

Through explicit teaching, repetition and observation, Teacher Shari ensured that children in her class had access to knowledge for participation in schooling. Recitation, demonstrations and observations can be construed as examples of socially mediated practices where the teacher and the children participated in joint and authentic acts (Rogoff, 1990). However, these practices also worked to construct the docile, becoming subject, which legitimated the role of the teacher as the primary transmitter and constructor of knowledge (Gutiérrez & Larson, 1994;

Larson, 2002). This negates children's own cultural experiences and capacities thereby legitimating the subjectivity of the becoming child.

Whilst Teacher Dee positioned children on the continuum of child development and on the road to becoming school ready, she also saw children as having a role to play in their own learning:

*I also learnt a lot from watching them ...from what they do and the seeing what they can do and how they can do it...this is where you pick up what you can do with them. It is not me who has done it – it is the children who have done it... I may have offered them the platform but they have done it themselves...they have listened, they have heard and associated and they have learnt.*

The statements “*I have learnt a lot from watching them*” and “*it is not me who has done it*” shows the child as an active agent who participates in knowledge construction and daily literacy experiences (James, Jenks, & Prout, 2001). Teacher Dee believed that children were both capable and agentic because while she “*may have offered them the platform but they have done it themselves, they have listened, they have heard and associated and they have learnt*”. However, these statements also reveal how this agentic, capable becoming child was constructed. Within this middle-class context, children were provided with the physical spaces, objects, learning opportunities and guided support to facilitate learning. By providing the support and learning opportunities Teacher Dee worked within the “paradigm of the middle-class” ways of becoming school ready (Ball, 2013: 98). In so doing, she perpetuated the existing social order by ensuring that a literate child was constructed within the social realities of the context within which she taught. However, in constructing the child as becoming (an adult in the making), children's literate capital and funds of knowledge in the home and communities are silenced. In addition, viewing the child in terms of only becoming in the future negates children's agency in terms of their present day being on the road to becoming. Strandel (2007) is in agreement for seeing the child as both being in the present and becoming in the future as this is a more realistic representation of the child and bridges the gap that makes children different from adults.

In this section, I have argued that that the dominant construction of readiness constructs the child as becoming. The construction of the becoming child was based on child development and readiness discourse. In the next section, I explore the discourse of the good parent and show how teachers regulated and normalised parenting in terms their beliefs of parental involvement in early literacy development.

#### **4.5 The good parent**

The role of parents in the development of early literacy was mentioned a number of times in the semi-structured interviews and usually included a range of auxiliary activities that parents could use in the development of early literacy. The teachers' statements revealed particular regimes of truth, which worked to produce acceptable ways of "speaking into existence" the subjectivity of the good parent (Sondergaard, 2002). A good parent was one who recognised the importance of early childhood education, was actively involved in children's literacy development, used English in the home and inculcated healthy eating habits in their children.

##### **4.5.1 The Importance of Early Childhood Education (ECE)**

The teachers' utterances about parents focused on parents not recognising the importance of early childhood education.

*Teacher Dee: They don't believe it is an important step in their child's education. They don't know the importance of the building blocks that happen from 3 years old...I don't think they think it is important enough – it is just playschool essentially.*

*Teacher Shari: but they should know that what goes on in school.... they should know how important it is for children to be here at school.*

From the utterances, it appeared that parents did not know the regimes of truth that circulated to construct the image of the child as in need of ECE. The statements, "*they don't believe, they don't think it is important enough, it is just playschool and they should know how important it is...*" revealed the teachers' frustration at parents' lack of understanding about the importance of ECE. The assumption was that parents who do not understand the importance of ECE also do not understand the significance of child development and school readiness:

*Teacher Dee: They don't know the importance of the building blocks that happen from 3 years old.*

*Teacher Shari: It will help their children when they go to school.*

The statements above enabled the teachers to position themselves as the 'expert'. Parents were classified as the 'non-expert' as they did not "*know the importance of the building blocks that happen from 3 years old*" and they were unaware that "*it will help their children when they go to school*". Normalising judgements of parents as the "non-expert" and the teacher as 'expert' played "a part in classification, hierarchisation and the distribution of rank...imposes homogeneity; [but] it individualises by making it possible to measure gaps, to determine levels...to render the differences useful by fitting them to one another" (Foucault, 1977:184). The teachers had knowledge of the importance of ECE and this knowledge ascribed power, which enabled them to classify and rank parents as 'not knowing'. This power/knowledge nexus worked to legitimate the role of the teacher as the expert. Consequently, the early childhood teachers' subjectivity was legitimated because they had the knowledge of the importance of early childhood education, child development and school readiness.

In addition, the legitimated power of the teachers was produced through the parents who didn't have this knowledge and did not understand the importance of having this knowledge.

*Teacher Dee: they send their children here because it is the right thing to do...everyone else is doing it!*

This regime of truth (Foucault, 1977) and 'Othering' of parents as only sending their children to the centre because everyone else is doing it reinforced Teacher Dee's subjectivity as an expert. The statements spoke to the invisibility of parents' capacity to possess knowledge of the importance of early childhood education, child development and school readiness while simultaneously drew attention to parents' visibility to only exist within a subjectivity to which Teacher Dee ascribed. Teacher Dee thus gained legitimacy as an expert through seeing the parents as being in deficit in respect of particular knowledge fields relevant to young child, learning and teaching.

#### 4.5.2 Parental involvement in literacy development

When I asked Teacher Dee about parental involvement in literacy development and learning, she indicated that she received very little support from parents as “*my experience of parents is that they don’t really help in the afternoon*”. Teacher Dee evaluated parents expected behaviours through her own cultural lens and upbringing. When she was young her parents were actively involved in her literacy development and education. This dominant discourse of parental involvement enabled her to “reify stereotypes of expected behaviours” of parental involvement (Popkewitz & Bloch, 2001: 85). As a result, she assumed that parents had a great influence and control over their children’s literacy development. Her utterances point to how she regulated parenting practices as a set of norms that were based on English, white, middle-class parenting styles as the ‘normative ideal’ (Foucault, 1977):

*They [my parents] were hugely significant...in my learning...So now I believe that parents are hugely important in helping children learn. I believe that parents are hugely important in helping children learn. They are the first priority because it is in the home that the child learns the first word – they learn their first sounds – that is where they learn to make the first sound.*

The statement, “*I believe parents are hugely important in helping children learn*” reveals how Teacher Dee attempted to produce the good parent as being important for early literacy learning. This ‘common sense’ logic was made even more compelling through her earliest experiences of becoming literate as she says, “*They [my parents] were hugely significant...in my learning...So now I believe that parents are hugely important in helping children learn*”. This common sense logic produced regimes of truth that assigned power to her argument. She was now able to speak from the position of the expert.

As the expert, she “*believe[d] that parents are hugely important in helping children learn. They are the first priority because it is in the home that the child learns the first word – they learn their first sounds – that is where they learn to make the first sound*”. These regimes of truth worked to constitute Teacher Dee as the expert, which gave legitimacy to her work and role as an early childhood teacher. These regimes of truth reinforced white, middle-class ways of becoming literate, which work

to produce the discursive formation of the parent as the non-expert because “*my experience of parents is [are] that they don't help in the afternoons*”. Because parents “*don't help in the afternoons*”, her subjectivity as a good teacher was further legitimated as she believed that she was providing something that she considered to be valuable to both children and parents.

Teacher Shari also spoke about how the parents had very little understanding of their role in early literacy development as, “*they think it is only my job*”. She spoke about how parents had difficulty in speaking English as the “*Afrikaans parents do not speak English at home and the Sesotho parents don't know English*”. As a result, parents were unable to assist their children develop language skills like the alphabet and phonetics because “*the parents seem not to understand even if I say learn [teach] your child a,b,c they would ask me what is this a,b,c?*” Her utterances point to the tensions that existed between home and school as there appeared to be a lack of functional fit between the expectations of the teacher and what parents were able to provide in terms of support. The teacher had particular expectations about what constituted parental involvement in early literacy development. Speaking English at home and teaching specific language concepts were considered legitimating checkpoints for parental involvement. On the other hand, the parents of the children in the study were unable to assist their children because they “*do not speak English at home*” and they “*don't know English*”. This dominant discourse of parental involvement privileged certain groups of children and families who had access to the dominant discourse and marginalised those who did not. In addition, this way of thinking around parental involvement masked diversity in terms of “viewpoints, family structure and resources for expected home/school relations” (Kainz & Aikens, 2007: 302). As a result this dominant discourse of parental involvement provided selective access to parents who could speak English and who could teach certain language concepts.

Both the teachers regulated parents' literacy practices as a set of norms and values that were intended to guide parental actions. English literacy practices such as story reading; discussing and reinforcement of literacy concepts taught at school were valorised at the expense of funds of knowledge for literacy experiences in the home.

The following excerpt shows how the teachers worked to change the culture of the home:

*Teacher Dee: I say to the parents read stories to them and ask questions from the story, do lots of talking and discussing the story. I say to their mommy or daddy, we have done this please help him at home. Please reinforce this, for example a square window on a car or a book that is a square.*

*Teacher Shari: I have books for homework for the children which I give them to take home...I tell them to read stories to the child and to talk to them about what they did at school. I also ask them to help me with their counting, colours and that sort of thing.*

From the teachers' statements, parents were positioned as adjunct teachers (Lareau, 2000). Consequently a tacit encouragement of cultural assimilation into school ways (De Carvalho, 2001; Prins & Toso, 2008) of literacy learning was evident. The assumption was that parents needed professional assistance about how to assist their children to become literate. By providing this professional assistance and knowledge, the teachers' subjectivity as the expert was thus further legitimated. Normalising practices of story reading, discussing, talking and rehearsal of concepts learnt at school, governed and encouraged a close alignment of the home with the school. The concepts of relational value (Fairclough 1989) and relationships (Gee, 2014) reveal how the language in the excerpts, constructed a hierarchical power relation between the teachers and the parents. Consequently, the teacher as the expert was able to govern (Foucault, 1982) and regulate parental involvement in relation to their expectations and the expectations of the ECC.

Teacher Dee spoke about how the "*the wealthier they [the black parents] get, the less involved they are in helping their children at home*". Many of the children at Cheerful Tots came from homes that could be considered part of the newly emerging black, middle-class. For the newly emerging black middle-class, the early childhood centre can be perceived of as a space that excluded them because of the predominance of English as a language that was used for communication and learning. While parental school choices might be based on quality (Msila, 2009) and better resources (Posey, 2012), black parents might still have feelings of a school culture that is not entirely welcoming. Olivos (2006) contends that many mainstream

black parents are less likely to be involved in school because they feel a sense of exclusion from the school system and society.

Taking into account our apartheid history, limited and inferior schooling of parents and dominance of the English spoken language at the centres, it was not surprising that the centre felt like an unwelcome space for the parents in my study. The teachers did not seem to have an understanding of the social and economic realities of parents who struggle to understand and speak English and are burdened with the demands of everyday life (Prins & Toso, 2008). By making the assumption that school and middle-class values are easily transferable to black and Afrikaans speaking parents, families' funds of knowledge and cultural capital were silenced and marginalised (Moll, Armanti, Neff & Gonzales, 1992; Bourdieu, 1986).

#### **4.5.3 Speaking English in the home**

Both the teachers had a limited understanding of the function of the home language in the development of second language learning. There were few links between the children's experiences with language and literacy in the home and with those in the early childhood settings. Typical comments included:

*Teacher Dee: The parents now have started to realise that they want to send their children to English schools. Which is fine...but I want them to speak English at home...to help their children because that is the language that is needed for later learning.*

*Teacher Shari: I would always write in the reports at school for the parents to please help me to speak English and I say that they should please speak English with the children.*

By valorising English language practices, the teachers systematically marginalised Sesotho and Afrikaans language practices. English as a language of power was used to shape and control the lives of parents by regulating the languages they spoke at home. Through a process of normalisation of English as the language for learning, parents' actions were governed through a process of rationalisation: *this is the language that is needed for later learning.*

Teacher Shari was aware of the persistence of the colonising discourses and this came from her experiences where she learnt in a language other than her home language:

*Yes I think it would be better for them to learn in Sesotho or Afrikaans ...I remember how difficult it was for me...but they are coming here to learn English and this is a[n] English school.*

However, the early childhood context and the parental choices for English language learning worked at most times to “make assumptions and values invisible, and turn subjective perspectives and understandings into apparently objective truths” (Moss & Petrie, 2002:30). It could also be argued that there was an expectation of an uncritical and non-reflective response from the parents, hence:

*I tell the parents to speak English to them...like if they are speaking in Sesotho to also speak in English. I say to them sing English songs and poems...read English stories...things like that.*

As a teacher positioned within the hegemonic discourse of English, Teacher Shari gained power and credibility by telling parents to ‘*sing English songs and poems, read English stories...things like that*’. These ways of thinking, believing and acting shaped the discursive knowledge of the hegemony of English, which was constituted as normal within the classroom context. Parental involvement became a means through which Teacher Shari formed, shaped and negotiated her subjectivity within the power relations of the school and classroom context. In this way, parental involvement became a tool for the teacher to execute her educational plan – getting the child ready for school.

Teacher Dee often made statements and assumptions about the children at the centre, their homes and families, which were different to her own. Through her talk, Teacher Dee classified parents based on their ability to speak English and help their children with literacy practices that were closely aligned with schooled ways of learning:

*I find the English parents would help the English children and they are not the ones who need help. They want to help, they want to read stories or reinforce the concepts at home.*

Power was assigned to parents who could speak English as “*they want to help, they want to read stories or reinforce the concepts at home*”. Hierarchically ordered categories were thereby created, based on the normalisation of English as the dominant language for learning in early childhood classrooms. In addition, middle-class, English ways of parenting were legitimated and normalised as “*English parents would help the English children and they are not the ones who need help*”. Afrikaans and Sesotho parents and their parenting practices were pathologised and found wanting because “*there is such a different cultural focus on what is important for these different groups of parents - the Afrikaans and Sesotho parents*”. The words, “*these groups of parents – Afrikaans and Sesotho parents*” signify a prior classification, which separated the Afrikaans and Sesotho parents from the English parents and positioned “*these groups of parents*” as the ‘other’.

Teacher Dee further differentiated between the Sesotho and Afrikaans parents by talking about how the black parents “*sometimes they can’t...they don’t know how and it is easier to speak your language in the home*” and the Afrikaans parents “*don’t really want to speak English at home and to their children. I think they feel like they are almost being forced to make their children speak English*”. A “paradox of linguistic hegemony” (Suarez, 2002:512) was evident in the actions of the parents. While Afrikaans and Sesotho are languages that were spoken in the home, parents of the children in my study made a conscious choice to send their children to an early childhood centre where English was used for learning and teaching. As Teacher Dee says, “*But if a parent wants them to learn in English – what can I say*”. At first choosing not to speak English in the home can be perceived of as resisting the hegemony of English within the space of the home. However, the parents have recognised that not knowing English renders one “parochial and powerless” (Suarez, 2002: 515). The parents of the children in the study have thus chosen to send their children to a centre where English was used as the language for learning. By doing this, they have recognised the value of accessing English whilst still retaining their cultural and linguistic capital in the home. Being bilingual is thus a successful

resistance strategy as “the promise of English only can actually be yielded by bilingualism, by becoming fluent in English and maintaining the heritage language and culture” (Suarez, 2002: 528) in the home.

#### **4.5.4 Healthy eating habits**

Teacher Dee believed that healthy eating habits were important for the physical and cognitive health of the young children at the centre. She believed that unhealthy snacks “*impacts on the health and well-being of the child because by 10 o’ clock they are so tired – they are like zombies they have no energy whatsoever*”. Teacher Dee believed that parents had little understanding of the importance of healthy eating habits and how this impacted on children’s learning as “*they don’t realise that a good old fashioned peanut butter sandwich is far better and healthier than Kentucky or a burger... this is so much healthier because they are able to concentrate and learn and complete the activities for the day*”. She drew on dietary standards normalised by white, middle-class and contemporary “Western standards for what constituted healthy eating” (Pike & Leahy, 2012: 435).

Through a technique of governmentality, (Foucault, 1991c) Teacher Dee was able to direct action and shape parents behaviour through dietary guidelines and advice -“*I tell them to just give your child a brown bread sandwich and yoghurt*” and “*I don’t want chips and sweets here*”. These guidelines and advice contributed to normalising specific standards for food practices within the home through particular constructions of the good parent and healthy eating. A good parent was one who was committed to the health, well-being and education of his/her child. The care and the kinds of snacks provided in the child’s lunchbox depict the kind of relationship between the parent and the child and extent to which the parents adhered to the guidelines and advice provided by the teacher. Through surveillance, the lunchbox became an “intersectional space in which an assemblage of governmental techniques and strategies, emanating from a variety of different sources, converged” (Pike & Leahy, 2012: 436).

The school lunchbox can be construed as a space where the “symbolic boundaries between the home and the school” intersected as it embodied the parent/child relationship and the parents’ attitudes to the well-being and education of the child (Pike & Leahy, 2012: 438). It also revealed an “omnipresent governmental strategy

capable of traversing into the private space of the family and home” (Ibid, 2012: 440). Everyday Teacher Dee evaluated the children’s lunchboxes “to see if they have fruit, yoghurt, sandwiches...those sorts of healthy snacks” and if they don’t “I call the parents and tell them what to put into their lunchboxes”. By calling parents and telling them what to put into their lunchboxes, Teacher Dee made the assumption that the parents ‘lacked’ the right kind of knowledge to be able to feed their children adequately and this ‘lack’ positioned them as the other and non-expert in relation to the normative assumptions of what constituted a good parent. Surveillance of the lunchbox enabled her to prescribe particular ways of preparing lunch boxes, thereby normalising parenting and particular kinds of eating habits.

Teacher Dee spoke about certain parents who resisted her advice and guidelines for healthy eating and “it is such a battle because I fight with them constantly”. She talked about how parents tried to justify why there were unhealthy snacks in the child’s lunch box. As one parent said “my child will eat everything in that lunchbox – she will put on weight so that everyone will know that she is not ill. She hasn’t got AIDS”. One can argue that the teacher’s positioning as an expert for what constituted healthy eating habits made her insensitive to the cultural interpretations coming from the parent. Foucault (1977) purports that the mechanisms for punishment in our society hold the body as an integral part of their agenda. The body is thus a site of surveillance and regulation. For example, for the parent being thin served as a social display of the evidence of the condition of HIV/AIDS. This social display of the body is seen and interpreted by others. The stigma associated with being thin and having AIDS served as a technology of power as people that are HIV positive are subjected to negative interpretations of their bodies and hence themselves. Consequently, the parent saying “she will put on weight so that everyone will know that she is not ill. She hasn’t got AIDS” reveals how the parent tried to manage and control the child’s body to avoid portraying inappropriate non-verbal messages such as being thin and looking unhealthy. The parent therefore displayed individual agency by ensuring that the visual display of the body was not stigmatised, classified and the child consequently marginalised. However, this dimension of the parent-taking agency seemed to have eluded the teacher and this was as a direct result of her positioning as the expert in terms of what constituted healthy eating habits.

Both the teachers thought that parental involvement in early literacy learning was important which they thought eluded the parents. Because the teachers thought that parents had little understanding of the importance of early childhood education, their role in early literacy development, the importance of speaking English in the home and inculcating healthy eating habits in their children, they were constructed as the non-expert. By parents not entering into these “games of truth” these regimes of truth worked to produce the early childhood teachers’ subjectivity as the expert and their role in early literacy learning as valuable and legitimate (Foucault, 1990:9). Simultaneously, the construction of the teacher as the expert, positioned the teacher with specialised knowledge of literacy pedagogical teachers that were considered important in the development of the literate child. In the next section, I show how these literacy pedagogical practices were used to construct the school ready literate child and consequently positioned the early childhood teacher as the expert.

#### **4.6 Conclusion**

In this chapter, I examined the early childhood teachers’ discourses to answer my research question: *What are the early childhood teacher discourses that inform literacy as social practice at the centres?* A genealogical analysis of the semi-structured interviews revealed four discourses: literacy as skill, the good teacher, the becoming child and the good parent.

For both the teachers, literacy was about listening, speaking, reading and writing. This dominant discourse of literacy had its historical roots in the teachers’ earliest experiences of becoming literate, the training programmes they were exposed to and personal experiences of teaching. This dominant discourse of *literacy as skill* converged to produce the image of the literate child with specific skills, competencies and knowledge, which was situated within the wider discourse of child development and school readiness. In constructing the literate child in this way, the discourses of child development and readiness converged to form the subjectivity of the *becoming child*. The scientificity of child development and readiness worked to produce the role of the teacher in a particular way. Power was assigned to the teachers because they had knowledge of what constituted literacy and what a literate child should be able to do and know; and best practices to support literacy learning. This

power/knowledge nexus worked to produce the discursive formation of the *good teacher*. In addition, the subjectivity of the *good teacher* further legitimated the early childhood teachers' work as being about getting the child ready for school, thereby further producing the subjectivity of the *becoming child*. In the construction of the *becoming child*, the teachers had particular assumptions about the role that parents played in the facilitation of literacy development. They believed that it was important for parents to know about the importance of early childhood education, child development, speaking English in the home and providing healthy snacks for their children. This knowledge enabled the teachers to speak into existence the subjectivity of the *good parent*. Because parents did not have this knowledge, the early childhood teachers' expertise was further legitimated and their role in literacy learning was positioned as valuable.

This discourses presented in this chapter converged to produce particular disciplinary and normalising effects for literacy, children, teachers and parents in different ways. In constructing the child as *becoming*, children's engagement and participation were relegated to the learning of specific autonomous skills required for school. Given this, one needs to ask the question as to how access, equity and participation can be widened for all children in South Africa to remove social class injustice. One way of enhancing access, equity and participation is to look at how children "exist integrally in the world, in a reciprocally and actively interconnecting and transformative process of living, becoming and just being (Alcock & Haggerty, 2013: 22). Readiness as a "normative developmental goal and the acquisition of particular knowledge and skills" leads to children being ranked and classified against a "deficit model, a set of inappropriate, one size-fits-all standards of readiness" for learning and school (Evans, 2013: 176; Whitebread & Bingham, 2011:11). This future-focused reductionist view of the literate child and a pre-occupation with what a literate child will become fails to recognise the "complexity and multiplicity of who, how and where we become" (Giugni, n.d: 1).

In the next chapter, I focus on how these discourses of literacy as social practice impacted on the practices of the early childhood teachers.

## Chapter 5

### The temporal and spatial construction of the literate child

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Take, for example an educational institution; the disposal of its spaces, the meticulous regulations which govern its internal life, the different activities which are organised there, the diverse persons who live there or meet one another, each with his own function, his well-defined character – all these constitute a block of capacity communication-power. The activity which ensures apprenticeship and the acquisition or types of behaviour is developed there by means of a whole ensemble of regulated communications (lessons, questions and answers, orders, exhortations, coded signs of obedience, differentiation, marks of the ‘value’ of each person and of the levels of knowledge) and by means of a whole series of power processes (enclosure, surveillance, reward and punishment, the pyramidal hierarchy). (Foucault, 1982: 218-219).

#### 5.1 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to answer my research sub-question: *How have the early childhood teachers’ discourses of literacy as social practice informed their practices at the centres and what are their effects?* Consequently, the central concern of this chapter was to examine how everyday classroom literacy practices were closely connected to time and space through “the disposal of its spaces...different activities...which ensures apprenticeship and the acquisition or types of behaviour through a whole series of power processes,” (Foucault, 1982: 218-219). Consequently, this chapter is structured around an analysis of the overlapping themes of time and space as significant disciplinary techniques. I analysed interview and observation data to reveal how the temporal and spatial as disciplinary techniques were implicated in the construction of the literate child. Disciplinary power was visible in the temporal and spatial configurations that played a central role in the construction of a literate child. It is through the control of activity and the distribution of individuals in space that the literate child becomes “an object and target of control” as the body/mind is “manipulated, shaped and trained, which obeys, responds, becomes skilful and increases its forces” (Foucault, 1977: 136).

Disciplinary power is thus directed towards the body and mind and in so doing “reaches into the very grain of individuals, touches their bodies and inserts itself into their actions, attitudes, their discourses, learning processes and everyday lives” (Foucault, 1980:3).

I drew on two of Foucault’s (1977) disciplinary techniques, the temporal and the spatial to give visibility to how literacy as a body of knowledge was used to construct a literate child in ECC for 3-4 year olds. I considered the different ways in which the control of activities was brought into effect and the art of distribution viz. the spatial distribution of individuals. Foucault, (1980, 2000) amongst others (May and Thrift, 2003; Massey, 1994; Soja, 1996) maintain that time and space are inextricably interwoven and therefore should not be separated. In his book *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault (1977) discusses time and space separately. I have chosen to apply the same techniques as outlined in *Discipline and Punish* to give visibility to how each technique operated to construct the literate child (Foucault, 1977). Analysing time and space in this way enabled me to understand how, when and why time and space were used as a disciplinary technique. Further, I was able to acquire an understanding of what and why early childhood teachers do what they do and, how, what they do is interwoven into the temporal and spatial construction of the literate child.

This chapter builds on from Chapter 4 where I identified the early childhood teachers’ discourses of literacy as social practice and how these discourses created ‘regimes of truth’ that worked to construct literacy, literacy practices, children, teachers and parents in different ways (Foucault, 1977). As outlined in Chapter 4, ideas for learning and knowing in literacy education at the centres were strongly influenced by child development, developmentally appropriate practice (DAP), school readiness and the image of a child as in a state of becoming. This knowability about how children learn and develop emerges from child development discourse and child-centred education discourse. Therefore, inherent within the analysis of time and space is the discourse of child development, DAP, school readiness and the child in a state of becoming. The discussion that follows reveals the interconnection between early childhood teachers’ discourses of literacy as social practice in Chapter 4 and the temporal and spatial construction of the literate child within this chapter.

This chapter proceeds in two main sections. In section 5.2, I begin by providing an account of the different ways in which the temporal control of activities was implicated in the construction of the literate child. To do this, I consider how time was organised and how time operated across the school day for the 3-4 year old child. In section 5.3, I examine the physical, spatial configurations to reveal how the use of indoor and outdoor spaces was legitimated through discourses of “discipline, learning, development, maturation and skill” (Halloway & Valentine, 2000:11). Organising the chapter in this way provided me with a possibility of thinking about how time and space could be used to analyse literacy as social practice in early childhood classrooms for 3-4 year olds. I considered how children were disciplined to become literate in relation to disciplinary knowledge and the different ways in which the training of the literate child was controlled through the use of time and space.

## **5.2 The temporal control of activity**

Foucault (1977:149) argues that one of the ways in which discipline works is through the “control of activity”. Grace (1993:69) concur by saying that “one of the characteristics of disciplinary power is its tendency to extract time and labour from bodies”. Thus the control of activity is a means through which “time can be extracted from the body through the use of the daily timetable, by breaking down a set period of time into ever more available moments” by correlating the body and the gesture, by articulating movements of the body with an object and by ensuring that time is used effectively and efficiently (Foucault, 1977: 149-156). The analysis of the temporal control of activity at the centres suggested that disciplinary techniques were at play in the construction of the literate child.

### **5.2.1 The timetable**

The timetable in an early childhood classroom can be construed as a means through which discipline operates. It is a “general framework for an activity” that serves to “establish rhythms, impose particular occupations and regulate the cycles of repetition” (Foucault, 1977: 149). In the ECC of my study, time was used to govern the school day where time was divided into minutes, half hours and hours (see Table 5.1). In this sense, the timetables served a disciplinary function in that it structured and ordered the children's school day, their sense of time and extracted labour from

their bodies through the structuring of their activities and their bodies (Foucault, 1977).

Below is a set of timetables for both centres (Table 5.1) that provide an illustration of the daily classroom routines and a general structure from within which the early childhood teachers and children functioned. From the timetable one is able to get a general picture of the school day with its starting and ending time and the regular, routinised practices in early childhood literacy training. Literacy training consisted of teacher directed activities and child initiated activities, which was a daily occurrence at both centres. Within DAP discourse, teacher directed activities (Gestwicki, 2013; Copple & Bredekamp, 2009) or curriculum time (James, Jenks and Prout (2001) are those ideas and activities that are controlled by the teacher. In DAP discourse, child initiated activities refer to those activities where the child takes the lead in making decisions, choices and plans (Gestwicki, 2011, Copple & Bredekamp, 2009).

**TABLE 5.1 CLASSROOM TIMETABLE**

<b>Cheerful Tots</b>		<b>Universal ECC</b>	
<b>Time</b>	<b>Activity</b>	<b>Time</b>	<b>Activity</b>
7:30 – 8:00	Child initiated activities	7:30 – 8:00	Child initiated activities
8:00 – 10:00	Teacher directed activities	8:00 – 12:00	Teacher directed activities
10:30 – 11:30	Child initiated activities	13:00	End of school day
11:30 – 12:30	Teacher directed activity		
13:00	End of school day		

Of the five hours and half hours that constituted curriculum time at Cheerful Tots ECC, two and a half hours comprised of teacher directed activities with an hour and a half allocated to outdoor free play activities. Not all of the two and a half hours allocated to teacher directed activities comprised of formal learning. For example, once children had completed their small group activity, they were allowed to play outside while they waited for the teacher to complete working with the rest of the children. At Universal ECC, of the five and a half hours allocated for curriculum time,

four hours made up teacher directed activities. The only time that children were engaged in outdoor free playtime was in the morning when they arrived at school.

The timetables depict the routines and cycles of repetition that were an inherent form of disciplinary power and control over the literate child. It served as means of regulating disciplinary time through precision and application. While the timetable ensured routine, repetition and precision, it was also an attempt to assure the quality of time used (Foucault, 1977). “Routines helps to constitute a ‘formed framework’ for existence by cultivating a sense of ‘being’ and its separation from ‘non-being’, which is elemental to ontological security,” (Giddens, 1991:39). As Dee says, *“The same basic things happen every day – we always come in at the same time, we always play at the same time, and we always do everything at the same time. It makes them feel secure and it also helps them in knowing what is going to happen next”*, (Interview: 28/02/2013). Shari states that she has *“a timetable...can you see? It is stuck on the wall. I try to follow the timetable every day. It helps...they know what we are going to do next.”* (Interview: 01/03 2013).

The excerpts above reveal that the teachers at the centres used time as a disciplinary technology in the construction of the school ready literate child. The teachers structured the school day, decided when and where to start and stop activities, decided when children were allowed to speak or listen, play or sit still etc. These attempts ensured that there was an “elimination of anything that might disturb or distract” the training of the literate child (Foucault, 1977: 150). The visual displays of the timetable on the wall and by knowing what is going to happen next correspond to child development, DAP and school readiness discourse. For example, in child development and DAP discourse, routines are considered to be developmentally appropriate and therefore suitable for children of this age (Gestwicki, 2011). Participation in these routines also ensured that children learnt to be both “schooled and literate subjects” (Dixon, 2010: 41). When children enter formal schooling, it is expected that they will be able to complete a number of tasks within a specific time. Knowing the classroom routines and being able to complete the task on time show how children learnt to govern themselves by becoming regulated school ready subjects.

Both the teachers' believed that doing the same thing at the same time and following a structured timetable allowed for "developmental and cognitive skills" to flourish and develop (Ball, 2013: 49). It also allowed for teaching and the curriculum to be organised in a serial ordering of events. Routines and cycles of repetition are important in early literacy practices as they construct the habitus, "the articulation and instantiation of bodily discipline" (Bourdieu, 1986; Luke, 1992: 119). "*Knowing what is going to happen next*" is an "instance of literacy training as a technology of the self" where children develop the correct bodily disposition/habitus to participate in everyday routines and cycles of repetition (Luke, 1992:119). The timetable with its predictable sequence of literacy classroom events ultimately aimed to foster the child's rule governed behaviour and self-regulation (Luke, 1992). Foucault (1988: 19) adds that by allowing a "certain number of operations on their bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct and ways of being", children "construct themselves as subjects", to become legitimated as school ready literate children (Dahlberg & Moss, 2005: 143).

At Cheerful Tots ECC, the helpers and the teacher established the rhythm of the school day as the children moved from one activity to the next. At Universal ECC, the school bell signalled the beginning and ending of the school day. Before the start of the school day, children at Universal ECC played outside under the supervision and observation of the teachers. When the bell rang at 8.00 a.m., the children automatically lined up in their year groups and were led into their classrooms by the teacher. This automatic lining up reveals how the children had learnt to govern their behaviour by becoming self-regulated and self-constituting subjects. Throughout the day, the teacher at both the centres ensured the movement from one activity to another and these activities were strictly time bound. The children were constantly told what to do next, ensuring that "activities are governed in detail by orders that had to be obeyed immediately" (Foucault, 1977:150). Observation, supervision and regulation were used as primary techniques for the disciplining of the psychological and bodily dispositions of the child. For example, while outdoor free play activity at Cheerful Tots ECC was child initiated, children were still subjected to surveillance by the adults at the centres. This on-going surveillance ensured that children's behaviour, their literacy learning and sequential development over time were continuously monitored.

### 5.2.2 The temporal elaboration of the activity

Foucault (1977: 152) argues that the activity is controlled is through the temporal elaboration of the activity where the activity is:

broken down into elements; the position of the body, limbs, articulations is defined; to each movement are assigned a direction; an aptitude, a duration, their order of succession is prescribed...A sort of anatomo-chronological schema of behaviour is defined”.

Table 5.2 depict several aspects of the general structuring of time and illustrate how time was a significant organising factor for the school day at the centres. The tables below have been adapted from Dixon’s work in *Literacy, Power, and the Schooled Body* (2010). Breaking down the activity into elements enabled me to identify the repetitive nature of literacy events as well as the teachers’ expectations in terms of occupation or tasks that children were expected to complete. The timetables are disciplinary in nature as children were expected to spend the appropriate time on task (Dixon, 2010). As Jenks, James and Prout (2001: 73) explain:

Discipline it would seem involves a control of a body, or more specifically an activity, and does so, most effectively through a timetable, children are required to eat, sleep, wash and excrete mostly at specific and regular times.

**TABLE 5.2: EVERYDAY CLASSROOM ROUTINES**

<b>Cheerful Tots ECC</b>		<b>Universal ECC</b>	
Time	Literacy Event	Time	Literacy Event
7:30	Indoor free choice activity <i>Tidy up time</i>	7.30- 8.00	Outdoor free play activity
8:00-8:10	Outdoor free play activity	8:00-	Teacher directed activities –

8:10-8:30	Teacher directed activity: Indoor morning ring <i>Register; days of the week; counting; nursery rhymes; songs with 4ctions; weekly theme; health and safety.</i>	9:00	indoor morning ring <i>Prayer, bible verses; days of the week; months of the year; seasons of the year; nursery rhymes; poems; songs with actions; weekly theme; toilet routine.</i>
		9:00 – 9:30	<i>Toilet Routine, Prayer, Snack time.</i>
8:30–10:00	Small group activity <i>Perceptual activity – joining the dots, colouring, painting, cutting and pasting.</i>	9:30-10:00	Outdoor Teacher directed activities. <i>Perceptual activities – gross/fine motor skill development.</i>
10:00-10:30	Snack time	10:00-11:30	Indoor teacher directed activities <i>(Whole class activity) perceptual activities – cutting, colouring, cutting, pasting, play dough)</i>
10:30-11:30	Outdoor free play activity	11:30-12:00	Story time
11:30-12:00	Story time	12:00–12:30	Prayer - Lunchtime
12:00-1:00	Nap time	12:30 – 1:00	Nap time
1:00	End of school day	1:00	End of school day

At Cheerful Tots ECC, the daily, routinised sequence of literacy events established a rhythm that was regulated by a major shift in activity from whole class activity to small group activity and outdoor free play. At Universal ECC, there were clear shifts from whole class indoor activity to outdoor teacher directed activity. These activities targeted “children’s bodies, inscribing the culturally determined disposition of a literate subject”, (Manyak, 2004:136). Whole class activity and small group activity were teacher directed while outdoor free play (at Cheerful Tots) was child initiated.

From the timetables one is able to see how activities were 'sequenced and paced' to assure "optimal sequences and coordinations" based on a "seriation of time...the seriation of successive activities" and the regulation and control of the literate child (Bernstein, 1990; Foucault, 1977: 160). Thus, "disciplinary time was gradually imposed over pedagogical time – specialising the time of training and detaching it from adult time, from time of mastery; arranging different stages...drawing up different programmes...[creating] a whole analytical pedagogy" (Foucault, 1977: 159).

At Cheerful Tots ECC, there were two helpers at Cheerful Tots ECC who assisted with the training and apprenticeship of the literate child. At Universal ECC, the teacher remained in control. The adults at both the centres were the regulators of time and regarded as a sign of authority to which the children had to submit. The recurring daily sequence of literacy events helped to cultivate an authoritative consensus about what needed to be done and how it should be done and was based on knowledge considered to be 'true' (Gore, 1998). These 'regimes of truth' are located within DAP and child development discourse where a literate child is one who acquires skills through reinforcement and in a sequential manner (Foucault, 1977). Table 5.2 reveals how each activity was broken down into elements where "each activity ensured the apprenticeship and the acquisition or types of behaviour" on the basis of knowledge considered to be 'regimes of truth' viz. the *becoming child* (Foucault, 1977).

The tables reveal that both learning and the regulation of children's behaviour were timetabled into routines that consisted of activity time, play time, inside time, outside time, nap time, toilet routine and so on. Each activity was filled with particular expectations for literacy learning and appropriate and timely ways of behaviour. In early childhood literature, routines are referred to as "events that happen regularly and at approximately the same time each day", (Hutchins & Simms, 1999:65). Egle (2008:102) states that, "routines provide a framework around which the program is structured to provide a sense of order and predictably to the children's day". Therefore, routines can be seen to play an important role in how a child's day is organised for the purpose of becoming literate. In addition, there is the assumption that these routines are essential for the training and apprenticeship of the literate

child. For example, the timetable was regular, ordered and predictable and consisted of inside time, outside time, playtime etc. within the same time frames, each day. These assumptions were shaped by the discourse of child development, school readiness and DAP that position children as individuals who will grow and develop in a regular, ordered and consistent environment.

The following analysis of everyday classroom literacy events are examples of how the school day was broken down into elements, bodies assigned movements, directions, duration and order - "an anatomo-chronological schema of behaviour is defined" (Foucault, 1977: 152).

When children arrive at 7.30 at Cheerful Tots, they engaged in free play activities inside the classroom. These activities were chosen by the early childhood teacher or sometimes by the children. As Teacher Dee says, "*We have drawing and puzzles, play dough in the winter. They do these activities at their tables – they can cut and draw, they can play on the ground with the blocks, whatever they want to do. It's complete free play...I have a programme that I put out – today we are going to do puzzles and blocks, tomorrow is play dough and chalk...or whatever I have in my programme*" (Interview: 28/02/2013).

During my observation of everyday classroom literacy practices at Cheerful Tots, I noticed that while at most times the activities were chosen by the teacher, the children were also given choices about what they wanted to play with. However, these choices were based on concepts already taught or perceptual readiness activities and exercises such as puzzles, block play, sorting activities by shape and colour; drawing etc. Cannella (1997) and Gallacher ((2005) state that free play is really a myth – children are not free to choose anything but to choose from available, carefully chosen materials. In other words, free play has become more formalised thus ensuring an increasingly disciplined literate child (Gallacher, 2005). While children at Cheerful Tots were allowed to choose what they wanted to play with they were in effect, constrained by the disciplinary power of the curriculum. As Teacher Dee says, *these free play activities are usually things that they have learnt...like...sorting of shapes, building number puzzles... and so on. It is important ... for the development of fine motor skills.* (Interview: 28/02/2013). Thus the learning activities that were available retain a significance of developmental

appropriateness (e.g. puzzles, play dough, cutting and pasting) and an autonomous sense of literacy development as an in-the-head process (alphabet puzzles, sorting activities by shape and colour etc.).

At both the centres, during the early morning ring, repetition was evident in the pattern of literacy events. When Teacher Dee was ready for the children, she called them into the classroom space and they had to sit on the carpet and wait for the teacher to begin the lesson. At Universal ECC, when the bell rang, the children would line up and Teacher Shari would lead them to the classroom. The children automatically placed their bags on the bag rack and lined up against the wall outside their classroom. They would only enter the classroom, once they were told to. What was evident is that children had become disciplined into the routines of learning and discipline as determined by the teacher at the centre - sit on the carpet and wait for the teacher to teach them, places bags on the bag rack, line up against the wall, stand and wait to enter the classroom. In this instance the power of surveillance was visible by Teacher Shari standing and waiting for the children to complete what they had to do before they were allowed to enter the classroom. While the children at both the centres had become conscious of the visible surveillance of the teacher, they assumed responsibility by becoming both the enforcer of the classroom routines (sit and wait on the carpet, stand and wait, line up etc.) and the enforced upon by the teacher.

Christian religious practices were strongly evident at the Universal ECC. The school day for the teachers began with a prayer meeting in the principal's office. They sang religious songs, read from the bible and prayed. These normative practices of the institution formed part of the teachers' discursive practices in the classroom. As Teacher Shari says "...*We pray two prayers everyday...in the morning and before we eat...then we say our bible verses*" (Interview: 01/03/2013). The following excerpt is an example of how the rituals and religious practices at the centre were grounded in corporeal relations of power (Foucault, 2008).

*Teacher Shari: fold your hands and close your eyes.*

*The teacher and children recite the Our Father.*

*Teacher Shari: Genesis, 1: verse 11. And the Lord made the heaven and the earth.*

*Children: Genesis, 1 verse 11, and the Lord made the heaven and the earth.*

*The same routine was followed for other bible verses such as Jeremiah, 51 verse 15, Psalms 121: verse 5 (Observation: 15/08/2013).*

Some of the children knew the verses and recited the verses with the teacher. They sang religious songs like the love of Jesus is so wonderful, building up the temple for the Lord, smile a while and give your face a rest. Both the teacher and the children sang, clapped and moved their bodies to the rhythm of the songs.

The religious embodied acts and bodily practices, *fold your hands and close your eyes, reciting the Our Father, singing and reciting bible verses* can be construed as a disciplinary technique to create a “docile body” (Foucault, 1977: 135-169). The children’s bodies and their movements were broken down into parts (eyes, hands, speech organs for recitation) so that the body could be trained with rational efficiency (Foucault, 1977). These rituals and religious practices – praying at the start of the school day and praying before eating are examples of “pastoral power” (Foucault, 2009: 126). Teacher Shari says “*I think it is important to start with a prayer. I need to teach them about Jesus and how to love your friends and play nicely together. Also it is about respecting God and Jesus.*” For Teacher Shari her role was defined by what Foucault (2009: 125-130) identifies as “care” and “beneficence”: *I need to teach them about Jesus and how to love your friends and play nicely together.*

The rituals and religious practices are “act[s] of conducting, directing, leading, guiding, taking in hand, and manipulating men...collectively and individually throughout their life and at each moment of their existence” (Foucault, 2009: 165). Through participation in these rituals and practices, children become disciplined as they learnt “*to love your friends and play nicely together*” and they learn to “*respect God and Jesus*”: an invisible presence. Showing respect for this invisible presence is in direct contrast to the assumption that children at this age are at the concrete level of cognitive development. The ability to show respect for an invisible being by participating in the embodied religious acts and rituals reveals the potential for children to also think in the abstract form.

The children at both the centres were also trained to assume correct bodily positions at snack time and lunchtime. During snack time, children at Cheerful Tots sat outside around small tables. Each table had a plastic tablecloth and the children could choose to eat with whomever they wanted. They were under constant supervision and surveillance by the teacher and the helpers at the centre. Children's lunchboxes were inspected and comments made about the contents of the lunchboxes. For example, if a child had brought a snack in his/her lunchbox, which was perceived as unhealthy, the teacher or the helpers would make comments about the unhealthy snacks. The child, his/her lunchbox and the parent were thus brought into public scrutiny. It is here that disciplinary power places the child and the parent into a field of constant surveillance by imposing "on those whom it subjects a principle of compulsory visibility" (Foucault, 1977: 187). As mentioned in Chapter 4, Teacher Dee had particular constructions of what constituted good healthy eating habits and these were based on white, middle-class values. Through the surveillance of the lunchbox she was able to prescribe what should go into the lunch box thereby enabling the normalisation of parenting and eating habits based on white, middle-class values and ways of being.

At Universal ECC, it was usual for children to pray before they were allowed to eat. The children ate inside the classroom and they were allowed to sit next to whomever they wanted.

*Teacher Shari: Close your eyes, fold your arms. God is good, God is great, thank you lord for the food we are about to eat. In Jesus' name. Amen. Children recite the prayer after the teacher (Observation 15/08/2013).*

Children at both the centres were expected to eat together and remain in their seats until they had finished their meal or they were told to leave their seats. Their bodies were thus confined to a certain space during a fixed time. Snack time and lunchtime provided the potential for the expression of control and authority over the literate body through a technology of training that Foucault (1977) likens to the disciplining of bodies in the army. Bodies were divided into parts (eyes, arms), which must be positioned in a precise way and within a specific time frame. The command and the physical organisation of the body – *close your eyes, fold your arms* provide a way for creating relations of authority and control. Students were physically organised to

facilitate surveillance by the teacher. They closed their eyes; folded their arms and repeated the prayer after the teacher. The pace of the instructions meant that the child had to pay attention in order to be able to pray in unison with the rest of the children. They thus learnt that this is what one does before meals: close your eyes, fold your arms and thank God for the food that has been provided.

Snack time and lunch time at both the centres thus became an everyday literacy event through a process of creating a space where children ate and drank (inside the classroom or outside of the classroom) and included etiquette about how children should eat and drink, prayer before meals; decisions about whom they should eat with, what they should eat and drink etc. The environment (inside and outside) then became an educator or 'pedagogue' for what constituted good eating habits (Gandini, 1998). Before the children ate, they washed their hands, fetched their bags, took out their lunch boxes and waited for Teacher Shari to begin the prayer before they started eating. They were not allowed to talk to each other during snack time:

*Teacher Shari: do not talk with your mouths full – Jesus will punish you, (Observation: 13/08/2013).*

From the above it is evident that the capillary effects of Christian values are evident through the constant surveillance by an invisible, omniscient being: Jesus (Foucault, 1980). This constant surveillance by both the teacher and the invisible, omniscient being (Jesus) enabled the child to internalise the norms of what constituted 'good' eating habits by complying with the rules as set out by the teacher: wash your hands, recite the prayer, sit quietly and eat, don't talk with your mouth full, etc.

While the children at Universal ECC were subjected to surveillance, Teacher Shari was also constrained by the institutional culture, the parents of the children and by her supervisor. This was reflected in an informal discussion where Teacher Shari said:

*...We do not eat outside. Teacher Thelma does not like us to eat outside. She says that people walking pass the school will see the children eating outside. I don't think the parents will like this. When we go outside the children have outside activities.*

At both the centres, the teachers did all the reading and writing activities whilst the children listened, chanted after the teacher or answered questions. The marking of the register became the first literacy event where “administrative surveillance” came into play (Dixon, 2010: 39). Teacher Dee called out the child’s name and asked, “Are you present?” The child had to respond by saying “present Teacher Dee”. She complimented and reinforced the practice by saying, “*what a good girl/boy; you are so clever!*” This routine revealed the normative expectations of what constituted a correct answer to the question. When children deviated from this normative expectation, they were corrected. For example, there were times when some children would choose not to respond to the question or just nodded their heads. Teacher Dee responded to the perceived incorrect answer of the child by saying, “*Michelle say, present Teacher Dee!*” (Observation: 14/04/2013). Children were thus inculcated into the correct way of answering questions, and expected behavioural norms. At Universal ECC, Teacher Shari marked the register by looking around the classroom and checking which children were present. This was usually done during snack time or when children were busy with an activity. From my observations at Universal ECC, it was evident that at no time were children sitting around and waiting to be marked present. Although they were not sitting around and waiting for their names to be called out, they were still subjected to surveillance, watching and the disciplining gaze of the teacher. One can also argue that this was a lost opportunity for learning the correct way of how to answer questions and expected behavioural norms during question and answer time. Knowing how to answer a question and how to take turns are considered significant for the development of early literacy skills in order to become legitimated as literate children and knowers of doing literacy.

Numeracy was used as a disciplinary and learning tool for early literacy at both the centres. At Universal ECC, the teacher counted up to twenty, recited the days of the week, months of the year and the children would repeat after her. Teacher Shari usually chose the poems, rhymes and songs that would be recited by the children. These oral recitations served both a disciplinary and an educational function. Counting, singing, recitation of poetry and action rhymes are considered important as during this emergent period of literacy development, children acquire knowledge of reading and writing through observation and participation in informal literacy

events. This oral literacy event enabled the children to learn the sound structure of oral language, which contributes to phonological and metalinguistic awareness. Thus when the children were occupied in singing, counting and reciting poetry, their attention was enhanced and they became engaged in the task through their body movements.

Once Teacher Dee has completed marking the register, she had a discussion around the theme that she has planned for the week. This usually involved concepts such as numbers, colours, shapes etc. The children would then recite the days of the week. Thereafter they would be asked to count up to number ten on their fingers. Then she would point to the number board and ask them what that number is. They usually responded by shouting out the number. When this occurred, Teacher Dee would tell them to put up their hands and not to shout out. Sometimes she singled out individual children:

*Teacher Dee: Lesedi, what number is on the green board?*

*Lesedi: 3*

*Teacher Dee: No Lesedi! Count from number 1. (Lesedi counts until she reaches number 5, which is placed on the green board). What number is that Lesedi?*

*Lesedi: Number 5*

*Teacher Dee: Good girl, Lesedi! (claps her hands) (Observation: 08/05/2013).*

The above is an example of an “analytical pedagogy” where each stage of learning is “hierarchized into small steps” (Foucault, 1977: 159). Lesedi’s participation is thus qualified under the “classificatory eye” of the teacher based on what constitutes literacy concept development and literacy learning for children of this age (Foucault, 1977: 147).

Once children have finished reciting the days of the week and counted up to number 10, Teacher Dee reads a story to them. The story was usually based on her daily theme. For example, if she was teaching a shape for that week, she would read a story that focused on shapes that were already taught and the new shape that she planned to teach for the week. She asked questions as she read the story: For

example, “*What shape is this? What colour is this shape? How many shapes can you see?*” (Observation: 10/05/2013). Children responded as a chorus. Sometimes she asked individual children questions and they were expected to respond in a particular way.

*Teacher Dee: how many kittens do you see in the basket Jan Hendrik? Count with me!*

*Jan Hendrik: 1, 2, 3, 4*

*Teacher Dee: Good boy!* (Observation: 16/05/2013).

From the above, it is evident that through the question and answer format, the anatomo-chronological schema of behaviour was defined – the act was broken down into elements (introduction to the activity, the resources used, questions asked), articulations were defined and the order of succession was prescribed (count from number 1, count with me) and the body was guided and trained by these clockwork composition of actions (good boy/girl, clapping of her hands to indicate approval). Children thus became objects of the system of evaluation and correction through a public display of literacy competency (counting, reciting, singing etc.) and the evaluation of individual literacy competency (good boy/girl). It is through the anatomo-chronological schema of behaviour that children “effect by their own means or with the help of others a certain number of operations on their bodies and soul, thoughts, conduct, and way of being, so as transform themselves” into becoming a school ready literate child (Foucault, 1988: 18).

After the early morning routine at both the centres, the teachers structured the school day by organising a series of everyday literacy activities that were either teacher initiated or child initiated. An analysis of everyday literacy practices will be discussed in the next chapter (Chapter 6) where I examine how everyday literacy practices are organised to form a “whole analytical pedagogy” under the “classificatory eye” of the early childhood teachers at the two centres (Foucault, 1977: 159, 147).

### 5.2.3 Correlation of the body and the gesture

Foucault (1977) contends, “disciplinary power imposes the best relation between a gesture and the overall position of the body, which is a condition of efficiency and speed” (1977:152). Thus a literate child is one who is able to position his/her body in such a way so as to complete a task with efficiency and speed to eradicate idleness and uselessness. Foucault uses an example from La Salle (1783) to reveal how the act of handwriting requires an effectual relationship between a gesture and the position of the body.

The pupils must always hold their bodies erect, somewhat turned and free on the left side, slightly inclined, so that, with the elbow placed on the table, the chin can be rested upon the hand, unless this were to interfere with the view; the left leg must be somewhat forward under the table than the right. A distance of two fingers must be left between the body and the table; for not only does one write with alertness, but nothing is more harmful to the health than to acquire the habit of pressing one’s stomach against the table; the part of left arm from the elbow to the hand must be placed on the table. The right arm must be at a distanced from the body of about three fingers and be about five fingers from the table, on which it must rest lightly (La Salle, (1783) in Foucault, 1977).

La Salle’s (cited in Foucault, 1977) example shows that a disciplined, literate child is one who knows how to position his/her body and knows what gestures are required to complete the activity. For example, throughout the morning ring the child was taught the correct body position:

*Teacher Shari: sit up straight; hands on your laps; look at me* (Observation: 24/07/2013).

*Teacher Dee: open your ears; listen to me; close your mouth. If you talk we cannot learn anything* (Observation, 12/04/2013) and *‘show me your ears* (Children point to their ears). *Can you hear a car outside? (They respond by saying yes). That’s because our ears are awake and we are listening* (Observation: 8/05/2013).

The statements *sit up straight; look at me; close your mouth; open your ears* are examples of how children’s bodies were arranged into the correct literacy habitus “the articulation and instantiation of bodily discipline” (Bourdieu, 1986; Luke, 1992:

119). Young children learnt how to function successfully in the classroom where their bodily movement, posture, and visual gaze were monitored and directed. Through surveillance, the teachers made judgements about what was considered normal/abnormal for the development of literacy skills and becoming school ready. Foucault (1980) argues that the power of the gaze is significant as the gaze constructs the learner and the knower (teacher). It is here that the “disruptive, unruly, outdoor child is over and the learning child” steps in (Holland, 1992:63). The child is taught that in order to learn, he/she must sit up straight, pay attention to the teacher and place himself/herself under the governance of the teacher (look at me; listen to me). The knowledge of how to sit, how to listen and who to listen to, are considered significant for the development of pre-literacy skills. These pre-literacy skills were examples of the teachers’ discourses of what constituted literacy, literacy learning and the becoming school ready child.

During the early morning ring at both the centres, the children sang action songs and recited poems and action rhymes. Many of the songs, poems or rhymes require body movement or actions to correspond to the words or lyrics. Rhymes, poems and songs became disciplinary in nature where the temporal elaboration of the activity and the correlation of the body and gesture intersected. The body was positioned - movements were assigned and their order of succession was prescribed (Foucault, 1977). The power of this technique was apparent as when children were engaged in body movements and singing, their full attention and engagement was activated. Through participation in these literacy events, the “visible signs of being in the lesson and the collective body are on display” (Luke, 1992: 123). Sitting still, listening, paying attention, reciting poems, rhymes and singing songs were a means by which the children used these disciplinary technologies to emerge as competent and literate. By engaging in these activities, the child “practically, mentally and concretely conforms to and disciplines himself” (Schei, 2013: 33). Consequently, through these “dominating discourses and practices, human beings construct themselves as subjects” (Dahlberg & Moss, 2005: 143).

#### **5.2.4 Body-object articulation**

For the child to be become literate, he/she needs to know “the relations that the body must have with the object that it manipulates”, (Foucault, 1977:153). This

instrumental coding of body consists of the breakdown of the total gesture into the parts of the body that must be used and the parts of the object that must be handled. It was during the small group activity at Cheerful Tots ECC and the whole class teacher directed activity (indoor and outdoor) at Universal ECC that the body-object articulation came into play and disciplinary time operated in great detail. During teacher directed activities and under the developmental “pedagogic gaze” of the teachers, children coloured in pictures, built puzzles, cut and pasted, painted, drew and traced (Ball, 2013: 101). These are all readiness skills associated with the development of pre-literacy skills. Children were taught how to hold the crayon, how to paint within the line, how to manipulate a scissors, cut and paste objects, etc. to create their own text. Being able to manipulate a tool, cut, paste etc. are examples of how the teachers “inscribe and read” the child’s “body as a surface of the mind” that is reflective of “contemporary psychologically-based pedagogy” viz. school readiness, child development and DAP (Luke, 1992: 118).

Disciplinary time was broken into segments, where time was allocated for training, practice and examination/assessment (Foucault, 1977). During training, children were taught how to manipulate different kinds of tools to create their own texts. For example, both the teachers worked with a theme. The duration of the theme was usually one week at Cheerful Tots ECC and two days at Universal ECC. Before Teacher Dee introduced a new concept to the children, she revised what she has taught and then moved on to the new concept. She explained the new concept, asked questions to facilitate understanding, explained what needed to be done and how it needed to be done in order to complete the task. For the whole week, the children were engaged in activities based on the concept that had been taught. At the end of the term, the children were assessed on the concepts that been had taught for the term. At Universal ECC, Teacher Shari handed out a worksheet to each child, then explained the activity and showed the children how to use different objects to complete the activity. The children then copied the teachers’ worksheet that was pasted on the wall. For the following two days, the children completed activities based on the concept that had been taught. At the end of the term, they were assessed.

The above is an example of an “analytical pedagogy” where each instance of learning was sequenced into small steps (Foucault, 1977:159). Specific time intervals were given to the literacy concepts to be learnt (two days or one week) as both the teachers regulated the “rate of expected acquisition... by regulating the rhythm of transmission and this rhythm may vary in speed” (Bernstein, 1990:76). Children were assessed at the end of the term so that the teachers had an understanding of the level at which each child was performing. Assessment then became a means of ranking children’s performances based on what they could do and what they could demonstrate. What children could do and what they could show therefore became defined in the context of learning, for example counting, drawing, colouring etc. Through training and pedagogy, children learnt to become literate within the rules of the classroom context. Children who did not fit into this mould or did not meet the rules of the classroom were usually classified and ranked as having further needs to be met or additional training.

The dominance of English as a language for learning was an example of how children were ranked as knowing/not knowing and classified as needing/not needing additional training. The hegemony of English thus worked as a set of disciplinary technologies to “set up and preserve an increasingly differentiated set of anomalies, which is the very way it extends its knowledge and power into wider and wider domains” (Foucault, 1982: 198). Ball (2013) agrees that these knowledges enable the use of different kinds of programmes such as therapists, extra language classes etc. to fix these anomalies. For example, the teacher at Cheerful Tots ECC encouraged parents of English second language children to send their children for additional English language lessons. A teacher from the English Language Unit based at the school provided additional language classes that focused on an extension of concepts taught. The teacher had classified second language English children as having additional needs based on the rules of the classroom and curriculum context, which were determined by her. By ensuring partnerships with parents of second language children, knowledge and power were extended into the wider domain of the home ensuring governmentality of parenting, level of parental involvement and the young child. Through these partnerships parents allowed themselves to become ‘colonised’ into the hegemonic practice of English as a language for learning (Luke, 1992).

### 5.2.5 Exhaustive use

Mastery of activities requires, “extracting, from time, ever more available moments and, from each moment, ever more available forces” (Foucault, 1977: 154). Foucault (1977) argues that in order to intensify the maximum use of time, more detailed internal arrangements need to be put into place to ensure speed and maximum efficiency. For example, while Teacher Dee was busy with children during the small group activity, the helpers at the centre supervised and monitored children waiting for their turn to be taught. During this time Teacher Dee made use of the maximum amount of her time by calling in small groups of children to teach them a concept under her supervision and observation. The rest of the children sat in rows of two outside. When the children had completed their small group activity, they were allowed to engage in free outdoor play. I asked Teresa, one of the helpers at the centres why did the children had to sit in a row before they were called inside to learn. She replied, “*Well if they don’t sit in a row, Teacher Dee will not know who has completed the activity*” (Observation: 03/04/2013). I argue that ‘wait time’ is not devoid of disciplinary power. Through surveillance and observation, the helpers at the centre organised the children for learning where they had to sit in rows and wait to be called to learn under the pedagogical gaze of the teacher. Children learnt that learning happens under the guidance and observation of the teacher and that they have to wait to learn. Sitting in a row and waiting to learn are examples of practical “grids of specification” that elaborate the early childhood centre’s institutional practices used to “specify social roles and to accord authority to the movement and those who work within it” (Foucault, 1972: 42; Woods, 2007: 4).

Children at both the centres had become used to the rhythm of the school day. For example, at Universal ECC, Teacher Shari says, “*line up to go to the toilet. Girls go first and then the boys*”. The girls line up in one row and the boys in another. She tells them to go to the toilet and wash their hands after they have used the toilet. The children carry out her instructions (Observation: 24/07/2013). Teacher Shari had set up norms for what she considered appropriate knowledge and habits relating to personal hygiene and safety. These norms were used as a disciplinary tool as they included rules for the use of the toilet and allocation of time for when and how the toilet could be used. Children thus learnt to regulate and fashion their bodies and shape their conduct to fit into the norms as determined by the teacher. The orders

imposed on the child ensured that effective learning took place and embodied practices became routinised. Towards the end of my observations at the centre, I noticed that Teacher Shari had to just say, “*Line up and go to the toilet*” and the children at the centre would immediately line up in the manner that they were trained. The timetable with its regular routine and repetition had “accelerated the process of learning...accustom[ed] the children to executing well and quickly the same operation, to diminish as far as possible by speed the loss of time caused by moving from one operation to another” (Foucault, 1977: 154).

In this section, I have shown how through the daily routines, children became disciplined and apprenticed into becoming literate. The daily routines established certain literate behaviours that became internalised. These internalised behaviours occurred through the control of the activity viz. the timetable; the temporal elaboration of the act; the correlation of the body and gesture; body-object articulation and exhaustive use. In the next section, I examine how the teacher used different spaces in the classroom, how access and movement into different spaces were controlled and how children were distributed within the different spaces in the classroom.

### **5.3 Spatial distribution of children**

Foucault (1977:144) argues that “discipline proceeds from the distribution of individuals in space”, and this is applicable to institutional spaces such as early childhood centres. Early childhood centres can therefore be seen to be the spatial apparatus through which disciplinary processes operate. Foucault (1977) claims that distributing bodies in space by arranging, locating, separating and ranking them is a form of disciplinary power. By these procedures the literate child ‘knows one’s place’ in the general economy of space associated with disciplinary power (McHoul & Grace, 1993:69).

Moje (2002) contends that all spaces are to an extent literate spaces as part of our everyday literacy practices involve a variety of written texts and other forms of representation – oral, gestural, movements, to navigate our way within and through literate spaces. I considered it important to examine the early childhood centre as an institutional space for “education, development, well-being and learning” (Lokken & Moser, 2012: 304). I used Foucault’s technique of enclosure to reveal how the early

childhood centre as an institutional space was used to discipline the literate body and mind “through discipline, learning, development, maturation and skill” (Holloway & Valentine, 2000:11). Thereafter, I discuss how spaces are partitioned to enhance literacy learning through, “knowing, mastering and using” (Foucault, 1977: 145). I then analyse how these spaces are used as functional spaces in the construction of the literate learner. Finally I discuss how children are ranked and classified according to ability and behaviour.

### **5.3.1 Enclosure**

The early childhood centres in the study can be described as spaces that are “closed in upon itself ... a protected place of disciplinary monotony” (Foucault, 1977:141). Foucault (1977: 141) argues that the aim of enclosure is to “derive the maximum advantages neutralize inconveniences; limit disruptions and ensure protection; monitor progress and the prevention and the remedying of any kind of abuse”. Deacon (2006: 180) states that from the mid-century onwards, the aim of education was to develop “children’s minds and bodies and the improvement of moral attitudes and behaviour”. However, at the same time the effects of enclosing children within confined spaces ensured stricter surveillance, accumulated knowledge and tighter separations (Deacon: 2006) from the outside world. One can therefore conclude that the early childhood centres in my study were spaces where children were gathered together in an enclosed space separated from the outside community, under the supervision of the early childhood teacher, which was made available for learning and examination.

Barbed wire fences with access-controlled gates surrounded both the centres in my study. At Cheerful Tots ECC, visitors had to sign in as requested by the security guard, and state the reason and duration of the visit. At Universal ECC, once children were in their classroom, the entrance and exit gates were closed. Latecomers or visitors had to ring a bell to get access into the centre. Baker (1998:118) argues the idea of protection and safety behind enclosed spaces can be construed as the discourse of “childhood as rescue” where children require separation from the outside world and from anything that might corrupt or negatively influence them. But at the same time this discourse of ‘childhood as rescue’ ensured

greater social control and gave visibility to the literate social body through disciplinary techniques of classification and differentiation.

Foucault contends that one can think of space as being real or ideal - "there are mixed spaces: real because they govern the disposition of buildings, rooms, furniture, but also ideal because they are projected over this arrangement of characterisations, assessments, hierarchies" (Foucault, 1977:148). Within the early childhood centres, the notion of real and ideal space reveals the tensions that exist between safety, control and discipline. These tensions reveal that enclosure as a childhood space is as a result of the continued concern to contain and regulate the child in his/her best interests as well as to ensure the safety and security of the child within the confines of the early childhood centre. In terms of the real, the barbed wire fences, the security guard and the gates are examples of how the early childhood centre was separated from the rest of the community and movements of individuals within the space were controlled from inside and outside. These enclosed spaces with security gates and security access all count as "surveillance of one kind or another, in which we are (usually) individuated - distinguished from other, identified according to the criteria of the organisation in question, and then some sort of analysis of our behaviour, transition, communication, behaviour or activity is set in train" (Lyons, 2009: 4).

On the level of the ideal, the early childhood centres should be spaces of safety, health and well-being for the young child. Valentine and Holloway (2003) speak to issues of the vulnerability of children in public spaces and the need for greater security. However, the authors also argue that an increase in security within public spaces results in these spaces becoming less child friendly. The protected spaces at the centres are in line with the procedures as set out in the Department of Social Development and UNICEF's Guidelines for Early Childhood Development Services (2006) in South Africa. These minimum standards require that all ECD centres be clean and safe, all precautions be taken to protect children and centre staff from physical, emotional and social harm, preventing any risks of fire, accidents or other hazards (Department of Social Development, 2006). While security measures at the school maybe considered important for the safety, health and well-being of the young child, they can also be viewed as a means of social control. By ensuring that

all children are within the confines of the same space at the same time, latecomers or visitors are scrutinised and distinguished from others within the school. For example, while you may be let into the school, as a visitor you are still considered an outsider.

### **5.3.2 Partitioning**

Partitioning allows for space to be used in a more flexible and detailed way. “Each individual has his own place; and each place its individual” (Foucault, 1977:143). The architectural space of the early childhood centres in my study point to how partitioning of spaces were used to manage and control the literate body in space. The arrangement of partitioning at the early childhood centres was cellular where children were assigned particular classes and places within the centre. Children at the centres were partitioned according to age groups so that each year group could have exclusive use of indoor and outdoor spaces. For example, at Cheerful Tots, each year group had its own indoor and outdoor space, whilst at Universal ECC; the outdoor space was a shared space. The shared space was timetabled so that the different age groups had access to the shared space at different times. This separation which analytical space, can be viewed as a means of “knowing where and how to locate individuals, to set up useful communications...to be able at each moment to supervise the conduct of each individual, to assess it, to e it, to calculate its qualities and merits” (Foucault, 1977:143). Partitioning of children into different spaces ensured that children’s movements were highly regulated and monitored by the teachers at the centre. For example, children were only allowed to leave the different early childhood spaces if given permission by the helpers or the teachers at the different centres.

Foucault (1997: 141) says, “discipline proceeds from the distribution of individuals in space”. Consequently, knowing where children were at any given moment in time ensured that the teachers were able to “supervise the conduct of each individual, to assess it, e it” (Foucault, 1997:143). At Cheerful Tots, the centre was separated from the rest of the school and enclosed within itself. Within the centre, each age group was separated from each other and gates were used to partition the different age groups. The gates had slam shut locks and these locks were placed high up on the gates to regulate and control movement between the age groups. As mentioned

in Chapter 3 (Section 3.3.3) Universal ECC was housed in a two-storied building which was originally a hostel for school boarders. The 2-3 year old classroom space was situated on the ground floor. The rest of the children from the age of 3 to 5 were housed on the first floor. This partitioning between the children on the first floor was more flexible as children were allowed to move freely between the different year groups during the course of the day. However, this was only done with the permission of the teachers for the different year groups.

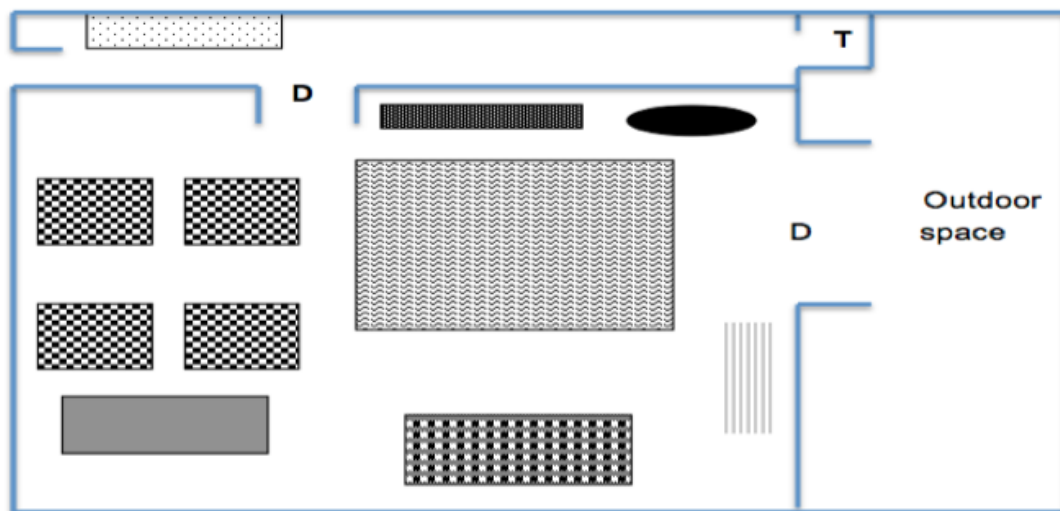
The partitioning of children into different ages in my study revealed how discourses of childhood highlight constructs of child development and early literacy practices in line with children's needs and interests. Teacher Dee says, "*The year groups are separated from each other because children have different needs and interests. My children need to play and run and jump more than the other children*" (Observation: 13/03/2013). The dominant discourse of child development is evident, which defined what was considered 'good' (normal) for children of this age viz. the separation of children into different age groups because they have "*different needs and interests and they need to play and run and jump more than other children*". Children were thus "sited, insulated and distanced" where their subjectivities were aligned to pre-specified routines such as play and separate spaces (indoor/outdoor) based on the ages and stages of child development (Strandel, 2007: 49). The children at the centre were thus tied to constructs of normalisation and processes of subjectification in relation to child development discourse (Foucault, 1977).

### **5.3.3 Functional sites**









Foucault (1977: 144) states that particular places were "defined to correspond not only to the need to supervise, to break down dangerous communications, but also to create a useful space". The two centres differed vastly in terms of the organisation of the classroom space and this was as a result of size of the different spaces at the centres. The size of the indoor and outdoor spaces determined how the space was used and the shifts and movements of children within that space. I have identified three spaces within the early childhood centres that can be considered functional sites viz. the carpeted area, children's' tables and the outdoor space. Each of these spaces constitutes functional sites as they were used for specific purposes and were designed to shape and train the literate learner in normalising ways (Wright, 2000).

At Cheerful Tots ECC, the spatial layout of the classroom was determined by organisational choices that Teacher Dee has made for the different learning spaces in the classroom (see Figure 5.1). When you enter the three-year-old space, there was a set of lockers for the children’s belongings. The toilets were situated down the passage leading away from the lockers and past the classroom space. The girls and boys shared the toilets.

**FIGURE 5.1: SPATIAL LAYOUT: CHEERFUL TOTS ECC**



**KEY: CLASSROOM LAYOUT AT CHEERFUL TOTS**

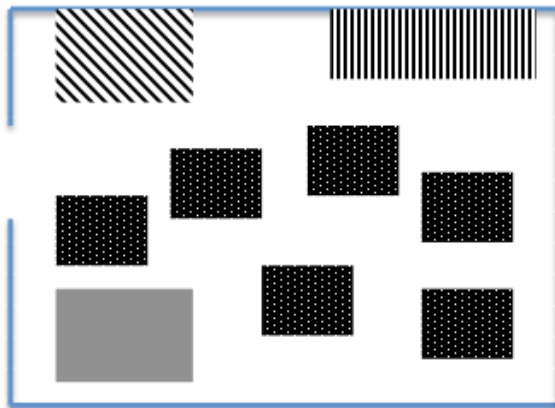
	Storage lockers for children
T	Toilets
D	Door
	Storage shelves for resources
	Children tables
	Reading corner
	Carpet area
	Television
	Teacher’s Table
	Fictional space – kitchen

As you enter the indoor space, there were rows of shelves for the storage of teaching and learning support materials. The learner support materials included puzzles, crayons, boards for threading activities, clocks; play dough, shapes, colour blocks and writing paper. In front of the shelves was a fictional kitchen space. Children were allowed to use this space during indoor, free play activity time. The carpeted area was a prominent space in the class, situated in front of the television and leading out into the outdoor learning space. There were four square learner tables, which seated eight children. The children's tables were used for small group, teacher directed activities. The reading area consisted of a bookshelf, a couch and cushions. There were a variety of books such as picture books, big books and nursery rhymes. The walls at the reading area were decorated with pictures of children reading and characters from nursery rhymes books. Teacher Dee's table was situated at the back of the classroom and was hardly used. Teacher Dee's movements in the classroom were dictated by the literacy routines and these routines did not revolve around the teacher's table as very little teaching and learning occurred there. The outdoor space had a sandpit, water play activities, a shop, a jungle gym and free, open play spaces. During outdoor free playtime, children participated by choosing a space and made decisions for the different ways in which to inhabit that space.





At Universal ECC, the organisation of the classroom space was dictated by its size (see Figure 5.2). The classroom was the size of a bedroom as the early childhood centre was initially used as a hostel for high school pupils. The size of the classroom was inconsistent with the regulations of the Department of Social Development who advocate a criterion of 1.3m<sup>2</sup> per child (Department of Social Development: 2006). There were moveable, three tiered, plastic shelves that were used for the children's bags and other belongings. During teaching time, the shelves were moved outside to make space for the children's tables. Children's tables and chairs were set up every morning and stacked away in the corner of the classroom at the end of the school day. There were six learner tables and each table seated four children. The classroom space was so small that the children were unable to move freely around the learning space. The teacher's table was situated in the corner of the classroom and was used for administrative purposes such as marking, sticking of worksheets into the child's workbooks and marking of the register. A built in cupboard was used

for storage of learner teacher support materials. The outdoor learning space was situated on the ground floor and away from the classrooms. All the children in the school shared the outdoor learning space. This space comprised of a sandpit; jungle gym; slides and open spaces for free play without equipment.

**FIGURE 5.2: SPATIAL LAYOUT AT UNIVERSAL ECC**



**KEY: CLASSROOM LAYOUT AT UNIVERSAL ECC**

	Moveable storage space
	Storage Cupboards
	Teacher's Table
	Children's Tables

Throughout my observations at Universal ECC, I noticed how flexible the spaces in the classroom were, and this was as a result of the classroom size. For example, the classroom space was re-arranged throughout the school day to make way for the children's tables for whole class teaching and the tables were only set up after the early morning ring and snack time. The children's tables were also stacked away every day to make room for story time and naptime.

During the course of my observations what was evident was that the adults at both the centres maintained the usefulness of the different functional sites. For example, the reading space at Cheerful Tots was perceived to be a quiet, restful area for reading and children who were ill. Both the teacher and the helpers at the centre

ensured that the children conformed to the ethos of this space as evident from the following classroom observation:

*Mickalee was ill and was lying on the couch in the reading area. Rebo and Kian came over and began to talk to her. Teresa, the helper came over and said, "Go play outside, you must be quiet here...you cannot play here"* (Observation: 15/03/2013).

During naptime at Universal ECC, the children had to lie on mattresses facing away from each other. Teacher Shari also positioned herself in such a way that the entire space was under surveillance (Observation: 30/08/2013). Towards the end of my observations, I noticed how children had begun to exercise self-discipline and disciplinary regulation where they took on the "role of the surveyor" (Gallagher, 2011: 52). The following observations from my field notes is an example of an instance of 'technologies of the self' where children take on the role of both the "surveyor and the surveyed" (Foucault, 1988; Gallagher, 2011: 53).

*Raven was trying to sleep and Ezra kept on talking to him. Raven turned to Teacher Shari and said, "Teacher Shari, Ezra is talking to me and we should be sleeping now"* (Observation: 12/09/2013).

In this instance, Raven was exercising power over Ezra independently and unreservedly. This reveals the close alignment with Teacher Shari's intentions of producing quiet spaces and docile bodies. As Foucault (2006: 233-234) expounds "this is perhaps the most diabolical aspect of the idea...this is a machine in which everyone is caught, those who exercise the power as well as those who are subjected to it". Surveillance and observation of children in the functional spaces ensured that ordered, docile bodies were constructed who would eventually become routinised, school ready, literate learners. In the next section, I identify three significant functional sites and show how these spaces were used to construct the habitus, "the articulation and instantiation of bodily discipline" (Bourdieu, 1986; Luke, 1992: 119).

### **The carpeted area**

There was no carpeted area at Universal ECC due to the size of the classroom. The carpeted area at Cheerful Tots ECC was a multifunctional space as it served both as

an open and restricted space. This was determined by the activity designed for learning at that specific moment in time. It was also a space that was partitioned and used for indoor free choice time, the early morning ring, music and story time. During free choice time, the carpeted area was a free space where children talked and played with each other using the resources set out for them by the teacher and helpers at the centre.

After the free choice activity and tidy up time, whole group literacy practices took place during the morning ring time on the carpeted area. The carpeted area then became a space for whole class teaching. During the early morning ring, the carpeted area provided not just a physical space for children to do something but it also involved certain behavioural norms. For example, it was usual for Teacher Dee to question the children about what they should be doing during the morning ring time. The following occurrence reveals how children discursively read the space or the teacher made them do so in relation to the bodily constraints that the space itself imposed on them.

*Teacher Dee: Who speaks inside?*

*Children (as a chorus): Teacher Dee.*

*Teacher Dee: I speak inside, you speak outside. Whose ears are listening?*

*Children: Me, me, me... (Observation: 17/05/2013)*

During the morning ring, the children sat on the carpet directly in front of Teacher Dee. Jones (2013: 3) asserts that “the chair physically elevates the teacher and as a consequence marks out the dyadic relationship between the adult and child” and carries with it powerful, authoritative qualities. The teacher’s positional power and presence was thus elevated and asserted as she had a panoptic view of all the children. It is here that her authority and regulation of the literate body comes into effect. Children were constantly told to listen, sit up straight, stop talking and pick up their hands to answer questions. In a study of children’s participation in literacy events, Larson (2002) found that classroom literacy events often limited children’s participation to observation of the teacher’s literacy practices. Larson (2002) showed how everyday literacy practices were examples of initiation, response and evaluation

(IRE) where the teacher talked, children responded and the teacher evaluated the response.

At Cheerful Tots ECC, the carpet was used to reinforce pre-literacy and pre-numeracy concepts such as colour, shape, alphabet letters and number. Each child had his/her own space demarcated on the carpet thereby setting up an invisible barrier between the children. This ensured tighter control for the efficient bodily and literacy training of the children. For example, when children attempted to contribute to discussions around a story, or share their ideas about what they did at home, Teacher Dee always directed the children's attention back to whatever she was discussing. The following is an example of how Teacher Dee controlled talk and interactions, where children were relegated to just answering questions and responding in a way as determined by her.

*Teacher Dee was reading a story about Barney at the zoo.*

*Lebo says: I have been to the zoo. I saw lots of animals.*

*Teacher Dee: That's very nice Lebo. Now listen to the story.*

*Teacher Dee carried on reading the story (Observation: 13/06/2013).*

What the young child in the classroom learnt was that participation as a literate learner consisted of listening, rote-performance and question-answer. The children also learnt that what counted as the correct instantiations of literacy responses were based on established classroom texts and responses to the texts as belonging to the teacher.

### **Children's tables**

At both the centres, children's tables were the means through which the structured development of literacy skills took place. At Universal ECC, Teacher Shari used the children's tables for whole class teaching while Teacher Dee uses the children's tables for small group teaching. Teacher Shari stood in front of the classroom during whole class teaching. During small group teaching, Teacher Dee sat next to the children as they completed their task. At both the centres, children's tables were easily controllable as there was no space for movement or privacy. The tables were thus a means through which surveillance occurred and the literate body was

normalised, regulated and classified. During small group time, Teacher Dee was able to identify children who were outside of the expected norm. Examples included children who could not pronounce certain words correctly, children who had problems with midline crossing, eye-hand co-ordination or specific learning problems like attention deficit disorder. These children were then referred to the speech therapist, the language unit or for specialised therapy. This revealed that the more spatially and temporally regulated the classroom spaces were, the more it produced children who were considered outside of the norm of what constituted a school ready, literate child. Both the teachers were able to exert disciplinary power and these formed part of their normalising literacy pedagogical practices. These normalising practices constructed the child as needing to know based on school ready discourse. The teachers' normalising pedagogic practices included demonstrations of what needed to be done, asking questions around the concept to be learnt, telling children what needed to be done and getting them to mimic her demonstrations through rote performance (Larson, 2002).

### **The outdoor spaces**

Outdoor activity at both the centres was highly regulated by the physical space in which the activity occurred and the resources that were available. At Cheerful Tots ECC, the outdoor space was used as a space for spontaneous free play and was supervised by the caregivers at the centre. Teacher Dee, *"they have free play once again – lots of free play – interaction with each other, hanging and swinging. Because I believe that they need to be physically active as well because most of them spend a lot of time sitting in front of the TV...Outdoor play is important for children at this age. They develop their muscles; they talk to one another and play nicely together. All this is done under supervision obviously* (Interview: 28/02/2013).

The teacher's view of outdoor free play was based on the belief that outdoor free play activities were spontaneous, developmentally appropriate, and important for gross and fine motor development. Therefore Teacher Dee rationalised the use of the undirected free play activities by rendering it workable, knowable and practical by considering it important for the development of pre-literacy and pre-numeracy skills (Allwood, 2008). The role of the caregivers at Cheerful Tots ECC was reduced to that of monitoring safe play. Surveillance and governing of the literate body thus

comes into effect through the continuous observation of children in the outdoor space.

At Universal ECC, the outdoor space was used for teacher directed outdoor activities. During the outdoor teacher directed activity, the children threw and caught objects, jumped over tyres; balanced objects on their heads etc. The development of gross motor skills and perceptual skills were considered important in the development of school literacy and the literate subject. *Shari says, "During my training, I learnt that learners need to play outside to develop their muscles ...this is important for writing, you know"* (Observation and discussion: 6/08/2013). *Teacher Dee – learners need to run and exercise their little bodies...* (Interview: 28/02/2013). The outdoor space allows for the teacher to "see constantly and recognise immediately" children who might be considered outside of the norm (Foucault, 1977:200). It becomes a space where under the "classificatory eye" of the teachers they were able to create and justify their use of outdoor play as a "whole analytical pedagogy" (Foucault, 1977: 147; 159). The training that each teacher received and the formalised and experiential knowledge that each had accrued over the years constitute an interplay of knowledge that became regimes of truth where play was considered important for socialisation and early learning. For both the teachers, the outdoor space was an authoritative and powerful space where children exercised their bodies and developed their muscles, which was considered important for the development of readiness for learning and school readiness. Consequently, the use and interpretation that the teachers assigned to the outdoor space was "defined by the cultural needs and fashions of countless others" situated within the discourse of child development, school readiness and DAP (Massumi, 1992:11).

#### **5.3.4 Rank**

Foucault (1977: 148) argues that in organising "organising cells, places and ranks, the disciplines create complex space that are at once architectural, functional and hierarchical". Within early childhood literacy classrooms, outdoor and indoor spaces was a means through which "supervising, hierarchising, rewarding" took place (Ibid, 147). Children were categorised, classified according to age, ability and gender. For example, children were assigned particular classroom spaces based on their age. The 3-4 year old classrooms were situated next to each other on the first floor at

Universal ECC. At Cheerful Tots ECC, children were separated from other children at the centre and this separation was based on age. Ball (2013) argues that school systems are rooted in a history of differentiation based on something deeper – ability. By separating children on the basis of age one is able to classify a children based on child development discourse. Within this discourse, “ the temporal ordering of subjects” is produced in relation to what is considered possible for a 3-4 year old learner in terms of their cognitive, social, emotional and physical development (Ball, 2013: 59). Separating children into different ages allows for a “pedagogical hierarchy to be created, dividing students up into more and more finely-differentiated units” (Ibid, 49). Foucault (1977: 160) states that this also allows for the “possibility of a detail control and regular intervention” to construct a school ready literate child.

The different spaces at the centres allowed for the continuous monitoring and regulation of children’s movements. This monitoring and regulation allowed for children to be ranked in a system of classification (Dixon, 2010). Foucault (1977) maintains that central to the process of classification is normalisation which as a standard unifies practice. At the early childhood centres in my study, normalisation was most evident as a distribution based on age, ability and behaviour. Ball (2013: 51) contends that at the very “heart of schooling, the very point at which teaching could articulate a form of knowledge, which related pedagogy to population and classroom practices to a general theory of management, distribution and entitlement”. I argue that the teachers’ classroom practices, knowledge related measures, pedagogical methods and techniques of analysis based on child development and school readiness discourse provided a “practical repertoire for the classification...management, distribution” and ranking of children in their education and care (Ball, 2013: 51). Power/knowledge thus operated to construct a school ready, literate child. The following example is an instance of how power/knowledge operated to fix individual differences through surveillance, regulation and normalising ways of behaviour

It is toilet routine time at Universal ECC.

*Teacher Shari: Girls line up first, then the boys... no pushing... or else you will go to the bad line (Observation: 22/08/2013).*

Power relations were evident as children's behaviour was regulated and monitored in terms of how the teacher expected children to line up – *girls first, then boys, no pushing*. The performance of lining up indicates a particular kind of literate child as one who was patient, who was part of a collective and whose visible, displayed behaviour could be assessed, judged and eventually ranked – *'or else you will go to the bad line'*. Through surveillance and conformity to expected normalising behaviours, children were ranked (good/bad) according to their degree of conformity or deviation from the expected norm. Conformity to expected ways of lining up were examples of how children had taken on this widespread and normalising behaviours. However, there were times when children ignored Teacher Shari's instructions by either going into the toilet without lining up or remaining in the classroom during the toilet routine. These instances of non-conformity reveal that while surveillance, regulation and normalising ways of behaviour were often widespread, their effects were also limited and temporary. Children's resistance and recalcitrance are examples of how they asserted their own power and agency.

#### **5.4 Conclusion**

In this chapter, I have examined the different ways in which the temporal and spatial regulation was implicated in the construction of the literate child. The various examples from the early childhood buildings, the daily routines, classroom literacy practices and the classroom environments that I have discussed in this chapter suggest that children were highly regulated in relation to the organisation of time and space. I have also provided examples of how children resisted the temporal and spatial regulation of their bodies/minds, thereby strategically adopting different subject positionings and displaying individual agency. In Section 5.2, I showed how through highly ritualised classroom routines, different activities, the temporal elaboration of the activity, children were disciplined and began to discipline and regulate their own learning and behaviour. The correlation of the body and gesture allowed for the efficient movements and speed of the body during every stage of their literacy training. The body-object-articulation showed how children were trained to use different objects needed to become school ready, literate subjects. Through the control of activity, children began to understand how classroom routines functioned, which worked to produce the discursive formation of the school ready subject.

In Section 5.3, I showed how disciplinary power worked directly on children's bodies and minds through the organisation of different spaces and activities thereby creating a "cellular, genetic and combinatory individual" (Foucault, 1977: 192). The different examples in this section are instances of bodily training and the working of disciplinary power on children's bodies, which emerges from everyday literacy practices in different classroom spaces. Specifically, children's bodies and minds were trained to be literate in specific spatial arrangements and by the distribution of their bodies in space.

Throughout this chapter, I have argued that the discourse of child development and school readiness regulated what teachers did and how they did what they did. I have revealed how the temporal and spatial regulation of children's bodies/minds were part of the governing practices that regulated early childhood teachers and curriculum through regimes of truth. These regimes of truth classified, ranked and constructed children in relation to child development and school readiness discourse. In the next chapter, I extend my discussion to reveal how the early childhood teachers' literacy practices worked to produce a school ready, literate child viz. the *becoming child*. My intention was to show how these different techniques of power are recognisable in the sites that were studied and that "they exist in pedagogical interactions," (Gore 1998). The analysis of the interviews, field notes and transcripts used in the analysis of this chapter (Chapter 5) and the next chapter (Chapter 6) are open to different interpretations and different readings of the power-knowledge nexus evident at the centres, which could be legitimated or not if read from different perspectives. However, my intention in these two chapters is to provide a possibility of researching how time and space and everyday classroom literacy pedagogical practices work to produce the discursive formation of the literate child. Chapters 5 and 6 together reveal how the organisation and delimitation of space and time and everyday classroom literacy pedagogic practices impact on how and the kind of literate child that is constructed.

## Chapter 6

### Everyday classroom literacy practices: Normalising the school ready child

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#### 6.1 Introduction

Chapter 6 is the second chapter that addresses my research question: *How have the early childhood teachers' discourses of literacy as social practice informed their practices at the centres and what are their effects?* In Chapter 5, I looked at how time and space were used as key disciplinary techniques to regulate and construct the school ready, literate child. In this chapter, I examine everyday classroom literacy practices that were considered 'usual' in early literacy classrooms; the kinds of literate children these practices engender and its normalising effects on children. These literacy pedagogical practices included teacher-directed and child-initiated activities. Throughout the different sections I reveal how disciplinary power operated through different literacy pedagogical practices and in so doing constructed the docile, school ready, literate child.

I used disciplinary techniques of "hierarchical surveillance, normalising judgements and assessment" to reveal how everyday literacy pedagogical practices become an "articulation and instantiation of a system of bodily discipline" (Foucault, 1977: 192; Luke, 1992:119). Foucault (1977) argues that at the heart of teaching is a defined and regulated relation of hierarchical surveillance, normalising judgements and assessment, which aims to improve its efficiency. Through classroom observation and transcripts from field notes, I was able to explore how hierarchical surveillance, normalising judgements and assessment operated at different levels to reveal the nexus between structure and agency for the teachers and the children at the centres.

Luke (1992) suggests the discourses of pedagogy, which regulate classroom literacy events is built around truth claims that constitute and position children as particular kinds of subjects and shape what counts as literacy in the classroom. Early literacy practices in my study were situated within the wider discourses of child development and school readiness. It was through these discourses and their associated discursive practices that the teachers were able to "to transform the pupils into a

whole field of knowledge” (Foucault, 1977: 186). The child was “made up and normalised” according to “officially sanctioned developmental truths of the child” (Ball, 2013: 53; MacNaughton, 2005: 30). Children’s minds and bodies thus became the discursive means through which certain literacy events, practices and pedagogies were instantiated in the early literacy classrooms of my study (Luke, 1992). In the construction of the literate body and mind, these literacy events and pedagogical practices became “practical grids of specification” for the “diagramming, classifying and categorising” of the literate subject (Foucault, 1972: 42). Luke (1992) argues that these grids work in such a way that they become internalised by the literate child, which leads to “self-surveillance” and “self-colonisation” (1992:111).

I analysed semi-structured interview transcripts and classroom observations of everyday classroom literacy practices to reveal how a particular kind of literate child was brought into effect viz. *the becoming child*. The analysis of data revealed that the ways in which the teachers constructed their practices was based on their constructions of literacy, children and their role as an early literacy teacher in early childhood classroom. The discussion in this chapter builds on from Chapter 4 where I identified four discourses and these were related to how the teachers constructed literacy as a socially situated practice at the two centres. In Chapter 5, I examined how these discourses were connected to their literacy practices and the construction of the literate child. I used the disciplinary techniques of time and space to make sense of how literacy as a body of knowledge was used to construct the literate child. This chapter continues with this analysis process by looking at how everyday literacy pedagogical practices were used to construct and regulate the school ready, literate child.

## **6.2 Normalising the school ready literate child: An integrated curriculum**

Throughout my observations, I noticed how literacy was integrated in and through the daily fabric of everyday literacy pedagogical practices. As outlined in DAP a ‘good’ early childhood teacher is one who integrates elements of literacy in all aspects of children’s learning including their play (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009). The idea of an integrated curriculum comes from a consideration of the integrated nature of child development where the child develops physically emotionally, socially and cognitively in stages (Gestwicki, 2013). The integrated nature of the curriculum and child development is borne out in the following utterances of the teachers:

*Teacher Dee : Yes it is very integrated. I believe that children at this age learn best in this way. All their senses are stimulated when you used art, music, song, stories to help children to learn. I don't have separate times for maths or language or life skills. I did try at one time – about two...three years ago. But they don't have the concentration power to sit for one thing and then to sit for another thing. It just doesn't work – it is a much happier situation if you integrate it all. We do a bit of Maths, a bit of Literacy and Life Skills but it is completely integrated (Interview: 28/02/2014).*

*Teacher Shari: I think if I teach the subjects separately it will be too much for them...they are too small to learn in that way Interview” (01/03/2013).*

Foucault (1981: 9) argues that these “practices don't exist without a certain regime of rationality”. Teaching literacy in an integrated way becomes a regime of truth because of the science of child development. These regimes of truth gave rise to particular regimes of practice (Luke, 1991). The teachers were also able to rationalise the use of an integrated curriculum as an “intellectual technology” (Rose, 2000: 28). The words “*I believe that children at this age learn best in this way... I did try at one time – about two...three years ago. But they don't have the concentration power*”...and “*they are too small to learn in this way*” served to justify and provided a rationale for the thoughts, opinions and beliefs of the teachers and they became unquestionably accepted and implemented into their practices. Implementing an integrated curriculum was therefore considered the norm and a means through which the “acquisition of knowledge by the very practice of teaching...increases its efficiency” (Foucault, 1977: 176). This normalising practice positioned the child as in a state of becoming - an adult in the making who lacked universal skills and features of the adult they will become because they are “*too small*” and “*they don't have the concentration power at this age*” (James, Jenks & Prout: 2001).

Using an integrated curriculum can be construed as a normative regulated “formed framework” that structured the school day in each classroom (Giddens, 1991:39). During my observations, I noticed how the teachers and the children performed different activities that were integrated with Numeracy, Literacy and Life Skills during teacher- directed and child-initiated activities and at different times and in different spaces. For example, during the morning ring, children would recite poems, verses,

count, identify shapes, colours etc. where Numeracy and Life Skills was integrated with Literacy. In this sense, an integrated curriculum can be construed as a “whole analytical pedagogy” that gave legitimacy to how the teachers planned what they did, how they organised the times, spaces, movements and utterances within the school day (Foucault, 1977: 159). In so doing, an integrated curriculum became the means through which the child was normalised and constructed as “subjected, practiced, docile bodies” (Bailey & Thomson, 2009; Foucault, 1979:27).

### **6.3 Teacher-directed literacy practices**

Teacher-directed literacy practices are those practices that are initiated by the teacher (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009). The early morning ring, small group teaching and whole class teaching are examples of teacher-directed activities that were used at the early childhood centres in my study.

#### **6.3.1 The early morning ring**

The early morning ring time at both the centres was a means of literacy training to get children to become self-regulated and get ready for learning. It entailed disciplinary technologies for the cognitive mastery of a set of autonomous skills and knowledge as well as bodily training. In this section, I show how the early morning ring was used as a “whole analytical pedagogy” to train, construct and discipline children’s linguistic and bodily habitus (Foucault, 1997: 15; Luke, 1992). I use surveillance, normalising judgements, assessment and technologies of power and the self to reveal how children are regulated and how they begin to regulate themselves.

It was early morning ring time at both the early childhood centres. The children at Cheerful Tots ECC were sitting on the carpet directly in front of Teacher Dee. Teacher Dee was seated on a chair overlooking the children.

*Teacher Dee: Everybody look at me! Sit on your bottoms. Show me your ears? (Children touch their ears). I speak inside, you speak outside. Can you hear a car outside? (children respond by saying yes). That’s because we are awake and we are listening. Ok, what day is it today? (Some children respond by saying Wednesday). Kian and Jan Hendrick you are not listening! You should be listening to me and not talking to each other (Classroom Observation: 15/05/2013).*

The children at Universal ECC were seated on their chairs directly in front of Teacher Shari.

*Shari: Good morning children (children respond by saying greeting her back). Show me your eyes (children point to their eyes). Show me your ears (children point to their ears). Show me your mouth (children point to their mouth). Now all of you look at me...you must listen to me and keep your mouths closed. Fagan, look at me! Do not look at your friend. Listen to me! You can talk to your friend when you go outside (Classroom Observation: 12/09/13).*

From the above, one is able to note that literacy was conceptualised as mainly about 'listening' and looking at the teacher, keeping 'your mouths closed' and not 'talking to your friends'. It also reveals how the disciplinary technology of hierarchical observation and surveillance was "integrated into the teaching relationship" (Foucault, 1977: 175). The teachers judged children's participation in the literacy event by reading the children's bodies. As discussed in Chapter 5 (Section 5.2.4) through hierarchical observation and surveillance, the teachers were able to read the child's "body as a surface of the mind" which is indicative of a "psychologically based pedagogy" (Luke, 1992: 118). When the technology of the self and self-regulation failed, the technology of power stepped in (Luke, 1992). The teachers used regulation as a technique of power to control "by rule, subject restrictions, invoking a rule, including sanction, reward, punishment" (Gore, 1998:243): "*You should be listening to me and not talking to each other and listen to me! You can talk to your friend when you go outside*". What is evident is that when children were not considered to be self-regulated, rules and ways of behaving were externally exerted by the teacher. The children at the centres thus learnt that inside classroom spaces remained the teaching and learning arena and the teachers' domain and outside free play was the arena for socialisation and play.

Sitting in an elevated position to that of the children and standing in front of them are examples of how the teachers were able to observe and supervise children's participation and monitor their conduct in the literacy event. This surveillance worked to produce the "operation of relational power that sustains itself by its own mechanism and which, for the spectacle of public events, substitutes the

uninterrupted play of calculated gazes” (Foucault, 1977: 177). By sitting still, keeping quiet, listening etc. children made these disciplinary technologies their own in order to visually display their literate bodies and become part of the classroom context. The early morning ring thus functioned as a technology of the self where children “permit[s] individuals to effect by their own means or with the help of others a certain number of operations on their bodies, souls, thoughts, conduct and way of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality” (Foucault, 1988: 18). The technology of the self-enabled the child to internalise a strategy for calming down thereby, becoming self-regulated.

During my observation, I noticed how consistent and on-going surveillance became difficult to maintain as the children themselves began to observe the teacher and check to see if they were being watched:

*Teacher Dee began her lesson by talking about the days of the week, numbers, colours and shape. Micah was not paying attention. He turned to Ethan and began to nudge him. Ethan nudged him back. They looked at each other, giggled and then quickly turned to check if Teacher Dee was watching them. They carry on participating in the lesson but still kept on nudging each other. Teacher Dee did not notice what was going on (Observation: 13/06/2013).*

The transcript above reveals how Micah and Ethan had become accustomed to constant observation and surveillance. They checked to see if Teacher Dee was watching them, participated in the lesson to some degree but continued to nudge one another. This vigilance on their part can be seen to parallel the action of surveillance on the part of the teacher – the teacher is herself being subjected to surveillance by the children. The children have learnt that they need to at least demonstrate some semblance of listening (*look at me, listen to me*) even though they might not have heard what was being said. It also shows how the children who knew they were being surveyed attempted to resist this constant surveillance by nudging each other and not listening. This form of resistance is an example of how they in turn watch the teacher for her reaction to their attempt at displaying individual

agency. When she does not do or say anything, they continue to nudge each other thus displaying their own power and agency in the literacy event.

At the end of the morning ring at both the centres, the teachers organised themselves and the children so that the transition from the morning ring to the toilet routine and small group teaching was smooth and efficient. During the transitions from one activity to the other, children's behaviours were observed, regulated and supervised. Technology of power operated to determine "the conduct of individuals" in order to eliminate "anything that might disturb or distract" from the training of the literate child (Foucault, 1988: 18; 1977: 150):

*Teacher Dee: We are going outside...line up. Don't push each other or else we will hurt each other (Observation: 04/04/2013).*

*Let us all go out like butterflies – softly like butterflies – we don't fly into each other (Observation: 08/05/2013).*

*Teacher Shari: Where must your finger be?*

*Children: On your mouth (Observation: 14/08/2013).*

*Teacher Shari: Girls line up first, then the boys.... No pushing ...or else you will go to the bad line (Observation: 22/08/2013).*

These highly ritualised classroom routines and transitions from one activity to another ensured that children were disciplined into schooled behaviour and a docile, literate body was constructed – "*let us all go out like butterflies – softly like butterflies*" and "*where must your finger be*"? The above extract reveals how literacy teaching and episodes of disciplining the literate body were indistinguishable from each other. The placement of children in lines, separated by gender is an example of how children were subjected to the teachers' control so that the teachers were able to "supervise the conduct of each individual, to assess it, to e it (Foucault, 1977: 143). Knowing where children were at every moment thus guaranteed surveillance and the regulation of behaviour. Being silent, not pushing and moving softly like butterflies can be construed as civilising schooled behaviour: *girls line up first; no pushing or else you will go to the bad line* (DePalma; Membiela & Suarez Pazos: 2011). A "civilised body is a schooled body, one that stays silent, walks in line, keeps its hands to itself" (Ibid: 2011: 81).

Disciplinary procedures and teaching literacy concepts were merged together to form a “whole analytical pedagogy” for training and disciplining the literate child’s body and mind (Foucault, 1977: 159). In addition, the children began to discipline themselves where they allowed the teachers to “affect by their own means or with the help of others a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls” (Foucault, 1988:18). The effect is one of “self-colonisation” where the child takes on the “responsibility for monitoring his/her own morality, discourse and body” by going outside softly as butterflies; not flying into each other; fingers on the mouth and girls lining up first (Luke, 1992: 111). Through surveillance and hierarchical observation, the teachers were able to differentiate and rank individuals or groups and classify them according to their behaviour – “*don’t push each other or else you will hurt each other*” and “*if you push you will go to the bad line*”. In this literacy event, the correct training and building of the literate child was evident. Particular behaviours like no pushing and running into each other and silences such as *softly like butterflies* and *fingers on your lips* were examples of how the teachers materially read and mapped the body of the child onto “grids of specification” for what constituted moral and good literate behaviour (Luke, 1992: 42). Being silent, moving in a particular way and being still were considered important for the training of a docile, literate body as they are “preludes to gestural and linguistic imperatives on *how we look* and *where we look*” (Luke, 1992: 120). The subjectivity of the child was thus “re-established as a collective identity” where movements and silences were marked onto the child’s body and mind in relation to the other children in the group. (Ibid: 1992: 123)

### **6.3.2 Small group teaching**

A key literacy pedagogical practice at Cheerful Tots was small group teaching. In this section, I provide examples of how small group teaching was a highly regulated and controlled literacy practice that had two main intentions: individualisation of children’s learning and development and child assessment. I show how under the “classificatory eye” of the teacher, small group teaching created a “whole analytical pedagogy” for the construction of the school ready, literate child (Foucault, 1977: 147; 159). The photographs below show how small group teaching was linked to individualisation of children’s learning and development and on-going assessment under the “classificatory eye” of the teacher (Foucault, 1977:147)

### **FIGURE 6.1: SMALL GROUP TEACHING**



Small group work was an important part of Teacher Dee's daily literacy practices, as she believed that she was *"able to help during the small group activity"* (Interview 28/02/2013). She spent about 10-15 minutes with each group. During small group work activity time, Teacher Dee planned activities that were linked to concept development and learning. She said:

*I bring in little groups to actually work with them. It is usually about three or four learners....just so that I can see if I teach them a new concept and explain it...if the child really understands. And then we do our physical work – colour in our triangle or look for triangles in pictures, or paint a triangle* (Interview: 28/02/2013).

Small group activities thus formed a 'functional', 'classificatory' and 'analytical' space, where Teacher Dee could teach and explain a new concept, determine if the child understood the concept and provide support if required (Foucault, 1977). Through surveillance, individualisation and the "classificatory eye" of the teacher, small group activities thus became a "whole analytical pedagogy" (Foucault, 1977: 147, 159):

*Because you know when they are in a big group you don't really know if all the learners understand. Everyone shouts out and you don't really know if all of them understand but individually you can get an idea if someone hasn't understood (Interview: 28/02/2013).*

Surveillance, individualisation and classification became normalising literacy practices that were used during small group teaching time to construct the ideal school ready literate child (Foucault, 1977). During small group activities, children carried out individual tasks like colouring, identifying objects in pictures, painting etc. This individual action then became a means for differentiation of children in relation to the extent to which they could complete the task. As Foucault (1977: 182) states "it refers individual action to a whole that is at once a field of comparison, a space of differentiation and the principle of a rule to be followed". Children who could not complete the task were classified as requiring extra support in relation to the "principle of a rule to be followed"- getting the child school ready. This support came either from the teacher – "*I am able to help during the small group activity*"; or the child was sent for extra English classes if "*they cannot pronounce English words or sounds correctly*" or they go for "*monkeynastics for the development of fine and gross motor skill*".

The following excerpt is an example of how surveillance, individualisation and assessment became normalising literacy practices that were used to construct the ideal school ready child during small group teaching time.

It was small group teaching time at Cheerful Tots. Teacher Dee was working with 3 children at the table. The rest of the children were waiting outside. Teacher Dee wanted the children to create a visual representation of birds' eggs in a nest by sticking crumpled eggshells onto the eggs in the picture.

*Teacher Dee: How many eggs can you see? Count with me. (The children count with her). What shape is the egg? Remember we did this shape this morning.*

*Ethan: Oval...it is like a long circle.*

*Teacher Dee: Very good Ethan. I want you to put some glue on your picture and then you must stick these things on the picture. What are these things called? (pointing to the eggshells)*

*Monica: Eggshells. I had eggs in the morning.*

*Teacher Dee: That's nice Monica...now listen to me! Touch the eggshells. How does it feel? Is it hard or soft?*

*Shannon: It is soft.*

*Teacher Dee: Feel it again. Do you think it is hard or soft?*

*Monica: Hard.*

*Teacher Dee: Yes it is hard but you can still break it. That's what I did...I broke the shell into little pieces. What colour are the eggshells?*

*Ethan: White.*

*Teacher Dee: Very good...now put some glue on your picture and stick your eggshells on the picture.*

*The children continued to work on their own. She observed what they were doing and corrected them if they stuck the shells out of the line.*

*Teacher Dee: Shannon, don't go outside of the line. Stick the shells inside the egg.*

*Shannon: it looks nice like this...see I made butterflies and birds with the shells.*

*Teacher Dee: No listen to me! Stick the eggshells on the eggs in the nest.*

*When they have completed their activity, they go outside and play (Observation: 18/04/2013).*

The above literacy event is an example of how Teacher Dee constructed “a whole analytical pedagogy” for what counted as literacy (Foucault, 1977:159). Each stage of learning and development was hierarchised into small steps where the child’s individual participation in the literacy event was ranked according to the expectations as determined by Teacher Dee (Foucault, 1977). She reinforced concepts of shape, number, colour and texture thus directing children’s literacy learning and development. She questioned the children, asked for clarification by questioning further and observed what children were doing. By integrating these different concepts she was working within the discourse of child development and school readiness where pre-literacy and pre-numeracy skills were integrated thereby ensuring the constitution of the school ready child.

One is able to see how small group teaching was specifically designed to train the child’s body and mind and shape it in particular normalising ways viz. school readiness. This normalising practice worked to construct the subjectivity of the *becoming child*. As a “whole analytical pedagogy”, small group teaching consequently became a means through which the child could be individualised and assessed thereby making the child visible (Foucault, 1977: 159). Hence Foucault, 1977) explains:

Disciplinary power imposes on those whom it subjects a principle of compulsory visibility. In discipline it is the subjects who have to be seen. Their visibility assures the hold of power that is exercised over them. It is the fact of being constantly seen, of being always able to be seen, that maintains the disciplined individual in his subjection. (1977: 187).

Regulation of children’s individual performances during small group work also became a means of individualisation and assessment of children in relation to their participation in the literacy event, which worked to constitute literacy practices in normalising ways. Through sequencing and pacing, Teacher Dee directed learning through the use of questions, directives and information (Bernstein, 1990). Teacher Dee’s control over learning was further evident in that she already knew how she wanted the children to answer - “*feel it again. Do you think it is hard or soft?*”? She also sets appropriate standards for how she wanted the children to complete the activity – “*don’t go outside of the line, stick the shells inside the egg*”.

Children's cultural capital and their funds of knowledge were almost invisible in this literacy event and children were only classified as knowing if they were able to work within the boundaries of Teacher Dee's outcomes for the lesson (Bourdieu, 1996; Moll, Amanti, Neff & Gonzalez: 1992). These ritualised literacy pedagogical practice positioned Teacher Dee "as the primary transmitter and constructor of knowledge" and the children as recipients" of the teacher's knowledge (Gutiérrez & Larson, 1994: 27). This is exemplified in the exchange between Monica and Teacher Dee where Monica commented that she had eggs for breakfast and Teacher Dee cut her off by saying "*That's nice Monica...now listen to me*". She thus positioned herself as the expert and the only resource to support the children's academic performance.

Surveillance was evident in the repeated commands (*count, touch it*) and questions (*what colour is it, how many eggs are there etc.*). These initiation-response-evaluation (IRE) sequences were examples of how the literacy event constructed what counted as literacy and what a literate child should be able to do, in order to be legitimated as a school ready, literate child viz. answering question and obeying commands as directed by the teacher. However, within this IRE pattern, Monica was able to play the language game by guessing the word 'hard' prompted by Teacher Dee's talk – "*feel it again, do you think it is hard or soft*"?

One of the ironies of this literacy event is that even though Shannon's output matched Teacher Dee's expected outcomes viz. sticking the eggshells on the eggs, her ability to use the eggshells to visually construct and represent butterflies and birds was immediately remarked upon: "*No listen to me! Stick the eggshells on the eggs in the nest*". Shannon was positioned as an unknowing subject and therefore needed to be given ideas by Teacher Dee – "*stick the eggshells on the eggs in the nest*". The children in this literacy event were expected to produce a particular kind of visual product as determined by the teacher. Shannon had taken the thinking aspect of the literacy event seriously by sticking the eggshells into shapes of butterflies and birds. However, her contribution to the construction of knowledge was essentially eliminated, thereby positioning the teacher as the expert. The children in this literacy event learnt that their thinking and ideas behind their drawings were not important but the appearance and a specific kind of visual product were, and this constituted significant literacy learning (Comber and Nichols, 2004). More importantly, the child as a meaning- maker and co-creator of knowledge was

negated where he/she was constructed and socialised to just 'doing' being a literate learner rather than being a full member and participant in the literacy classroom.

The exemplars show that during small group teaching time, Teacher Dee's practices became normalised based on pre-assumptions of sameness in relation to how children learn and develop. This enabled her to identify individual differences, measure educational gaps in terms of universal norms of the school ready literate child. Cutting, pasting, answering questions, sticking objects within the line etc. are all normalising pre-literacy skills that Teacher Dee believed children need to learn to become school ready. Through observation and under the "classificatory eye" of the teacher, Teacher Dee was able to "*work with*" the child to identify differences in understandings (Foucault, 1977: 147). She was able to ensure that there were no deviations from the norm in relation to the literacy skills required to become school ready. Small group work thus functioned as a means of individualising children's development and learning through classification against the norm of literacy skills required to become school ready. Children's learning and development were then regulated towards the achievement of these literacy skills under the "classificatory eye" and normalising judgements of the teacher (Foucault, 1977: 159).

### **6.3.3 Whole class teaching**

In this section, I discuss how whole class teaching operated as a normalising practice that regulated the learning of children so as to construct the school ready child. At Universal ECC, the small classroom space and large numbers placed unique demands on Teacher Shari. At the very least, Teacher Shari had to ensure that she created a classroom environment that was conducive to early literacy learning for all children. Whole class teaching was therefore a classroom management response to the classroom space and to a large class of 28 children. As Teacher Shari said during the semi-structured interview, "*the class is too small to do small group activities and there are too many children in the class*" (Interview: 01/03/2013). Disciplinary techniques of power were most evident during whole class teaching and this was as a result of the nature of the activities that took place during this classroom literacy practice. During whole class teaching, Teacher Shari explicitly taught the same concept to the entire class simultaneously, assigned individual tasks to children at their tables for practice purposes and assessed individual performances on assigned tasks through hierarchical observation. Whole class

teaching was thus a highly regulated and a tightly controlled pedagogical space for the individualisation, observation and assessment of children under the “classificatory eye” of the teacher (Foucault, 1977: 147).

Whole class teaching took place directly after teacher directed outdoor play at Universal ECC. Before Teacher Shari started teaching the concept that she had chosen for the day, she spent about 5-10 minutes organising the classroom space and organising the children’s bodies into proper listening behaviours. Teacher Shari set out the children’s tables so that four children could be seated around a table. The photographs below provide a visual representation of the seating arrangements of the children during whole class group teaching and this was a direct result of classroom size and the number of children in the classroom. One can see that the classroom size and the arrangement of the classroom space prevented children from moving around and communicating with each other except for with the children who were seated at their tables. Each child was securely confined to his/her space and this enabled the constant monitoring and hierarchical observation of the child under the “classificatory eye” (Foucault, 1977: 147) of the teacher.

**FIGURE 6.2: SEATING ARRANGEMENTS AT UNIVERSAL ECC**





The following excerpt is taken from a whole class teaching literacy event that formed part of everyday literacy pedagogical practices at Universal ECC.

The children were seated at their tables in groups of four and Teacher Shari was standing directly in front of them (Observation: 12/09/2013).

*Teacher Shari: Be quiet and let's pray. Close your eyes, fold your arms, (children do this). Thank you God for this day. Keep us safe always. Amen (children repeat after her). Are you ready to learn?*

*Children: Yes Teacher Shari.*

*Teacher Shari: Okay that's good. Let's sit still...don't wriggle in your chairs. look at me and listen.*

One can notice that at the outset of the whole class teaching literacy event, children's bodies were arranged into the correct bodily and literacy 'habitus' viz. sitting still, looking, listening etc. (Bourdieu, 1984). Being quiet, listening and sitting still ensure that children's bodies could be constantly arranged and targeted during the whole class literacy event as disciplinary commands were interspersed with class teaching. Showing readiness to learn by praying, sitting still, looking at the teacher and listening are bodily demonstrations that functioned as prerequisites to learning. These commands can be understood as disciplinary techniques that were used to position the child as a docile, literate listener. Teacher Shari began the whole class teaching literacy event by asking the children to count from number 1 to 20. She

pointed to a chart on the wall and asked the children to count with her. After the children had finished counting she took out a book based on number 1.

*Teacher Shari: Look at this book. All of you look at this book. I can see who is not looking at the book. What number can you see on the cover?*

*Children: Number 1 (they shout out).*

*Teacher Shari: Don't shout out! Lift up your hands. Lerato, what is this? (pointing to a tomato in the book).*

*Lerato: A tomato. I see a tomato.*

*Teacher Shari: That's good. Ezra how many tomatoes can you see?*

*Ezra: 1 tomato.*

*Teacher Shari: Good boy. Cameron, what colour are the tennis balls? (Cameron looks at the teacher and does not answer. She does not respond). Josh, what colour are the tennis balls?*

*Josh: yellow, yellow, it's yellow. I have that ball at home. Me and my sister...we play with my ball. (Other children begin shouting out saying that they have also have tennis balls at home).*

*Teacher Shari: Okay listen everyone...be quiet and pay attention. How many tennis balls can you see?*

*Children: (shout out) 1.*

*Teacher Shari: Kyle and Alicia, I can see that you are not listening...stop talking. How will you learn if you don't listen? If you want to talk, pick up your hand. Ashley stop looking at your worksheet and pay attention.*

*She continued paging through the book and asked different children to count, identify the objects and colour of the different objects in the book.*

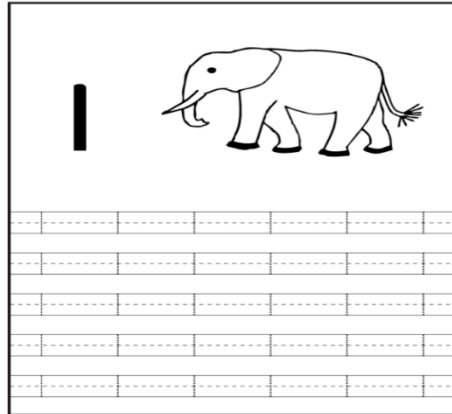
An analysis of the above literacy event shows how Teacher Shari was operating within the normative definition of what constituted literacy. Definition of literacy in this context was grounded in an autonomous model of cognitive skills where children were expected to repeat and answer in the way that she expected them to. In addition, these literacy skills were divorced from children's everyday experiences

and “excluded children’s language resources in the construction of literacy knowledge” Larson, 2002: 76). This was evident in the way in which Josh and other children’s comments about the toys they have in their homes were ignored. In doing this Teacher Shari missed the opportunity to incorporate children’s everyday experiences into this literacy event. Children’s participation and co-construction of knowledge were thus restricted and their participation was limited to that of hearer and listener.

When Cameron did not keep up with the pace of the lesson, she ignored him and asked Josh instead to answer the question. She did not attempt to further question Cameron to check if he understood what she was teaching. At no time during this literacy event did Teacher Shari attempt to use children’s everyday knowledge to scaffold children’s learning to the new knowledge that had to be learnt. This could be because the emphasis in this literacy event seemed to focus on children’s compliance with different actions aimed at regulating how they answered, their body positions, movements and vocalisations (Manyak, 2004). The repeated nature of the literacy event reveals the procedures for the sequence of operations that children had to perform. They had to identify the object in the picture, identify the colour of the object and finally count the object. This is in keeping with child development discourse where children learn and develop in stages and through repetition. While this may represent the child’s developmental step towards getting school ready, these procedures can be construed as constructing a docile, literate individual who embodies respect for positional power of the teacher and the early childhood institution.

Foucault (1980: 142) argues, “that there are no relations of power without resistance”. The above extract shows that even though restrictions were placed on children’s bodies and the way in which they were required to answer, children still seemed to resist these constraints within a classroom space of sparse possibilities. They talked to each other, looked at their worksheets, shouted out and spoke about the toys that they had at home. In these instances when children did not pay attention to what Teacher Shari was doing or their conduct was considered undesirable, she used more surveillance (*I can see you are not listening*) and disciplinary commands (*be quiet, stop talking, pay attention*).

After Teacher Shari had formally taught the concept by using the book as a resource, she modelled the way in which she wanted the children to complete their individual activity. She pasted the following worksheet on the wall.



*Teacher Shari: Ok boys and girls, look at my worksheet! Pay attention and watch what I am doing. You are going to do the same thing on your worksheet. (She demonstrated the task by joining the dots to form the number 1). When you are writing number 1, you start from the top of the line to the bottom of the line. Colour in the elephant grey because the elephant is grey. (She then coloured in the picture of the elephant). Now copy what I have done.*

In this teacher-centred interaction, instructional directives such as “*look at my picture; you are going to do the same thing and copy what I have done*” positions the teacher as the expert and sole author of this literacy activity. The words “*you are going to do the same thing and copy what I have done*” was an example of normalisation where children’s production of their written text was based on conforming to the standard of Teacher Shari’s text. In setting the standard, children’s role in this literacy event shifted from hearer and listener to copier of the teacher’s demonstrations.

While the children were busy, Teacher Shari walked around the classroom and observed what they were doing. She constantly intervened if the children were not performing the task according to the prescriptions she had given them. Through hierarchical observation, normalising judgements and assessment of children’s work in progress, Teacher Shari positioned herself as the expert, knower and evaluator. For example, “*Lebo, colour in between the lines...don’t go outside of the lines...look*

*at my worksheet” and “Katlego put your crayon on the top of the number and go straight down. (She demonstrated by holding Katlego’s hand over the crayon and together they formed the number)...now you do what I did”.* Once the children had completed their task, Teacher Shari called them individually to her table, marked their worksheets; made comments about the quality of the work and stuck the completed worksheet into their books. For example, Malita had coloured the elephant blue.

*Teacher Shari: “What colour did you colour your elephant?”*

*Malita: Blue.*

*Teacher Shari: Look at my elephant...is it blue? (Malita did not respond). Elephants are not blue, they are grey...like the one in my picture...ok.*

Malita’s construction of a blue elephant was not discussed but rather the visual representation of the text was commented upon. Malita was not able to make connections as to what thought processes she used in the construction of the text. While her individual agency might have come through in colouring the elephant blue, she learnt that in order to be positioned as a writer she had to reproduce what the teacher wanted of her.

The teacher was able to assess and monitor the children’s performance according to the norm of school readiness. Counting, colouring, joining the dots are perceptual skills that are considered age appropriate for children of this age. The continuous, “visible, authoritative gaze” of the teacher over children’s performances and behaviour can be seen to be pedagogically sound and justifiable as the role of the early childhood teacher is to ensure that children are able to accomplish their tasks efficiently within a specific period of time (Foucault, 1977: 177: 173). While children in the classroom were constantly observed and surveyed, Teacher Shari was also subjected to surveillance and “constant supervision, pressure of supervisors” from the principal and parents of the children at the centre (Ibid, 1977: 150).

Keeping records of children’s performance in the form of children’s books and worksheets were used as a disciplinary technology, which served as a means through the principal and parents monitored and regulated the work of the teacher.

For example, each child had an A4 exercise book into which the teacher stuck the completed worksheets.

*Teacher Shari: When we have parent meetings, we show the parents what their children can do. The principal also checks our lesson plans and the learners' books (Interview: 01/03/2013).*

One can argue that all individuals at the centre were subjected to “hierarchical observation: a visible, authoritative gaze, which is able to see everything constantly” (Foucault, 1977:173). Foucault (1977) remarks that surveillance is part of the practice of teaching – teachers watch children, but are also observed by parents and the principal at the centre.

Foucault argues that power is neither completely positive nor negative, but rather what is significant is the way in which “specific practices actualise relations of power” (Gore, 1998 233). Foucault (1980, p.39) elaborates:

But in thinking of the mechanism of power, I am thinking rather of its capillary form of existence, the point where power reaches into the very grain of individuals, touches their bodies and inserts itself into their actions and attitudes, their discourses, learning processes and everyday lives.

For example,

*Me: Why do you have books for each learner?*

*Teacher Shari: The principal prefers books. When we have parent meetings, we show the parents what their children can do. The principal also checks our lesson plans and the learners' books (Informal Discussion: 16/08/2013).*

Foucault (1977: 189) maintains, “the power of writing was constituted as an essential mechanism of power”. The learners' books, worksheets and the lesson plans placed into writing what surveillance had uncovered as the teacher and the learners' activities were captured and fixed onto a page. These artefacts contained all the information that was considered important to both the teachers' and children's' performances that were under surveillance and hence, assessable. In addition, the documentation of findings guaranteed that this knowledge was easily available to those who needed to access them viz., parents and the principal at the centre.

All the teachers at Universal ECC were underqualified. The principal at the centre believed that if she knew what was going on in the classroom, she would be able to provide support where required. The following comments were indicative of this:

*“I encourage the teachers to study further. Most of them do not even have a matric. I check their work every day...this helps me to see if they are teaching the concepts that need to be taught. I try to support them...I have some retired teachers who come in to help sometimes with teaching certain concepts”* (Informal discussion with the principal: 10/08/2013).

Within this context, one needs to view surveillance as specific to the rationale and outcome of the activity of surveillance (Lianos, 2003). One can therefore argue that this conscious and planned management of human activity was beneficial for the delivery of *what needs to be taught*. To control the teaching and learning environment and to avert the disapproval of the parent community, the principal checked *“their work every day...this helps me to see if they are teaching the concepts that need to be taught”*.

#### **6.4 Play as a normalising practice**

Play or free play is considered important to children’s learning and development in early childhood education (Wood, 2009). The notion of play is regarded as best practice and as a normalising practice gains currency as a strategic action that teachers take to ensure children achieve academically while maintaining their commitment to play based learning (Goldstein, 2007, Wood, 2009). From my analysis of classroom observations, I was able to identify competing discourses of play that ranged from child-initiated to teacher-directed play. My analysis also revealed that play represented a particular space where discourses about childhood, learning and teaching, which were situated within the wider discourse of child development and school readiness. These discourses reveal the relationship between structure and agency, which have significant consequences for the subjectivities and embodied experiences of the participants at the centre. In this section, I make the distinction between teacher-directed and child-initiated play, which formed part of everyday pedagogical practices that occurred at the two centres. I analyse indoor and outdoor play to reveal how play as a normalising practice was used to construct a school ready, literate child. In addition, I also

explore how curing this normalisation process of the school ready literate child, children began to govern and regulate themselves, hence displaying individual agency (Foucault, 1977).

#### **6.4.1 Child initiated indoor free play**

Indoor free play activities took place in the morning on the carpeted area and at the children's tables at Cheerful Tots ECC. During this representation of indoor free play, children were positioned as being in control of their play.

*Teacher Dee: I like them to have a little bit of free play to interact with each other when they first arrive...they can cut and draw, they can play on the ground with the blocks, whatever they want to do. Its complete free play (Interview: 28/02/2013).*

The words “*whatever they want to do*” can be read as Teacher Dee privileging free play and positioning children as being in complete control of their play. This enabled Teacher Dee to privilege the dominant developmental discourse where play was seen to enhance social, emotional, physical and cognitive development of children. At the same time, by choosing to do whatever they wanted to do, children were constructed as active agents and co-constructors of their learning. However, my observations of indoor free play activities revealed that while it gave the appearance of being a de-regulated space, it was highly governed and regulated. It was here that disciplinary technologies of hierarchical observation, normalisation and assessment were used to construct the school ready child. This could be because a discourse that legitimated children's agency, placed restrictions on the role of the teacher as she herself was under surveillance from the school institution and the other teachers at the centre:

*“At the beginning of the year the teachers from the Foundation Phase and all the other teachers at the centre meet together. The teachers tell us what they want the children to be able to do and what they need to know (Informal discussion: 07/05/2013).*

These restrictions impacted on Teacher Dee's literacy practices during indoor free play activity time. My observations revealed that Teacher Dee's panoptic gaze was ever present during indoor free playtime or what Welland (2001) refers to as “an

empire of the gaze” regulated by visual surveillance (2001: 218). The following data generation from classroom observations elucidate this interpretation explicitly:

*It was the first activity for the day at Cheerful Tots ECC. Activities were set out on the carpet and on the learners’ tables. The children could choose whatever they wanted to play with. The activities for this day included puzzles, paper and crayons for drawing, building blocks and shapes. Teacher Dee and the two helpers at the centre constantly moved around the classroom space, observing every single movement and activity of each child. As the adults moved around, they controlled the behaviour of children by issuing commands such as “quieten down; stop talking; don’t run around; sit up straight, don’t lie on the carpet”. They also provided suggestions or help when required, as the children were busy with their free choice activities (Observation: 10/04/2013).*

Thorough hierarchical observation and assessment of children’s activities, posture and behaviour, an embodied docility in the children was constructed. This docility was considered significant, as children needed knowledge of how to ‘do’ school viz. how to sit; be quiet; not to run around etc. to be a legitimated as literate and school ready children. As Teacher Dee says, “*we know what the child needs to be ready for Grade R or Grade 1...so we plan what we each need to do to help the child to learn*” (Informal discussion: 07/05/2014). The pedagogic strategy employed and the curriculum content was thus closely aligned to school readiness so that “close[ly] observing, watching” became closely aligned to the provision of activities that would ensure that children become school ready (Gore, 1998: 235). With school readiness as a benchmark indicator for the development of the school ready, literate child, assessment and hierarchical observation thus became a normalising pedagogic practice during indoor free play.

The following excerpt is an example of how indoor free play and visual surveillance at Cheerful Tots acted to inscribe and regulate the docile, school ready, literate body. Teacher Dee was able to use disciplinary power to classify, rank and differentiate individual children from one another.

*Diederick was building an alphabet puzzle on the carpet. Teacher Dee was standing over him and observing what he was doing.*

*Teacher Dee (says to me): Diederick does not know his alphabet yet. But he can make this puzzle. I don't expect children at this age to know their alphabets or their sounds. He is such a clever boy I leave this puzzle out every day and he is the only one that can do this puzzle (Observation: 10/04/13).*

The excerpt shows how Teacher Dee's literacy practices proceeded through "classificatory mechanisms – the classification of knowledge, the ranking of individuals and groups" (Gore, 1998: 240). Teacher Dee intentionally organised the classroom space and learning materials during free play to ensure that children's learning was sequential, regular and repetitive; hence guaranteeing that the "body is constantly applied to its exercise (Foucault, 1977: 151). This is shown in:

*I put out these activities so that they can practice what they have learnt (Interview: 28/02/2013).*

The repetitive nature of the activities that were planned for indoor free play was thus highly regulated and controlled by the teacher to ensure that children acquired literacy skills in preparation for their future roles as school ready, literate children viz. the becoming child.

Under the "classificatory eye" of the teacher, Diederick was assessed and categorised as a '*clever boy*' and differentiated from the other children in the class because '*he is the only one who can do this puzzle*' (Foucault, 1977: 147). Indoor free play and hierarchical observation thus worked to form a "whole analytical pedagogy" that produced an embodied docility in the young child because "*every day he does this puzzle*" (Ibid, 1977: 159). While Diederick might appear to be docile, he has also learnt the rules of doing school. Even though he was not subjected to constant and daily surveillance, he continued to play with the puzzle every day. This is an example of how the technology of the self-operated where Diederick was able to "attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection or immortality" because he knew he had Teacher Dee's approval (Foucault, 1988: 18). In addition Diederick also enacted practices of hierarchical observation and surveillance on the teacher to ensure that he was legitimated as a literate learner. Although, he didn't know the letters of the alphabet and their order, he was able to make sense of this puzzle building activity by making choices about which puzzle piece fitted into the

correct space. He strategically positioned himself as a co- constructor of his own learning and knowledge based on the teacher's approval. In this way he worked "with the grain" in order to be legitimated as a literate learner (Cumming, et.al, 2013: 231).

Although, Diederick was positioned as successful because he could complete the puzzle, the teacher lost the opportunity to scaffold his learning by teaching him how certain sounds corresponded to the pictures in the text. This was because she assumed that children at this age were not capable of knowing the alphabet or phonetic sounds. These assumptions are associated with the becoming child, which is core to the dominant discourse of child development. However, Diederick's ability to complete the puzzle shows that children can be both "competent and incompetent" depending on the situation in which they find themselves (Uprichard, 2008: 307). The challenge for Teacher Dee was to realise that children can be both becoming and being; and therefore capable of constructing their own childhoods, knowledge and learning on the road to becoming school literate.

Directly after indoor free play activity time, children at Cheerful Tots participated in tidy up time. Tidy-up time formed part of indoor free play and was a routine that signified the movement from one activity to another viz. free play activity to teacher-directed activity. The teacher, the helpers and the children were all involved in tidy up time. Like all other routines in the classroom tidy up time was not simply repetitive. It functioned as a means of maintaining social order and enhancing self-regulation as Teacher Dee believed that it was "*important for children to clean up after themselves...this is part of learning how to take care of their own things and toys ...but they also learn how to do things together as a group*" (Informal discussion: 18/04/2013).

At times, children often attempted to avoid helping with tidying up of the classroom, with varying levels of success as is evident in the following classroom observation:

*At tidy up time, Teacher shouted out "tidy up time". The children repeated after her and began also to chant, "tidy up time" as they picked up their resources and placed them in the toy boxes. Unathi and Mickali ignored Teacher Dee's instruction and continued to colour in their picture. Ethan and Ebrahim were in the kitchen 'making' sandwiches. When Thelma told them to*

*tidy up the kitchen, they ignored her and carried on making their 'make believe' sandwiches. Dee and the helpers didn't say anything to them and they continued playing in the kitchen. Rebohile and Kian carried on building the puzzles. Kutlano and Monica went and stood by the door, waiting to be let out of the classroom. The rest of the learners helped Dee and the helpers put away the resources and tidy up the classroom (Classroom Observation: 27/03/2013).*

The chanting and the embodied acts of participation in the routine of tidy-up time shows how children had become self-regulated through their conformity to the norms of the environment and rules of working together. Luke (1992: 123-124) explains that these norms inscribe student bodies with “particular ways of speaking, acting and behaving and they come to represent the morally, regulated literate subject”. The children, who helped Dee and the helpers to tidy up the classroom, had “internalised the disciplinary and cultural gaze as his or her own”, (Luke: 1992: 111). While the training of the docile, literate body reinforced the understanding that the teacher was in control and children were therefore powerless, there were children who often resisted the demands of tidy-up time. This was evident through their embodied acts of resistance viz. standing at the door, ignoring instructions, or carrying on building their puzzles. These acts of resistance were expressions of the children’s individual and social agency where there was a “struggle for ownership...within the formal curriculum” (Armstrong, 1999:83). Ignoring the commands, prioritising activities, which they considered important for themselves and paying attention if they considered it important are examples of how children resisted the subject positioning of the docile, literate body/mind.

#### **6.4.2 Outdoor free play**

Whilst outdoor free play was a pedagogical practice that was used by both the teachers at the different centres, the way in which it was structured differed. At Cheerful Tots ECC, outdoor free play was child-initiated while at Universal ECC was teacher-directed. These two pedagogical practices have been positioned as “oppositional or a pedagogical binary” (Thomas, Warren & de Vries, 2011: 69). In this section I discuss child-initiated indoor play, child-initiated outdoor play and teacher-directed outdoor play. I show how play was organised for the physical growth and development, cognitive development and the social and personal

development of the young children at the different centres. While outdoor free play was a highly regulated space that was used to construct and normalise the school ready, literate child, it was also a space where children made use of different resources, managed their participation in collective and individual activities and managed their own regulation thereby displaying a technology of the self and individual agency.

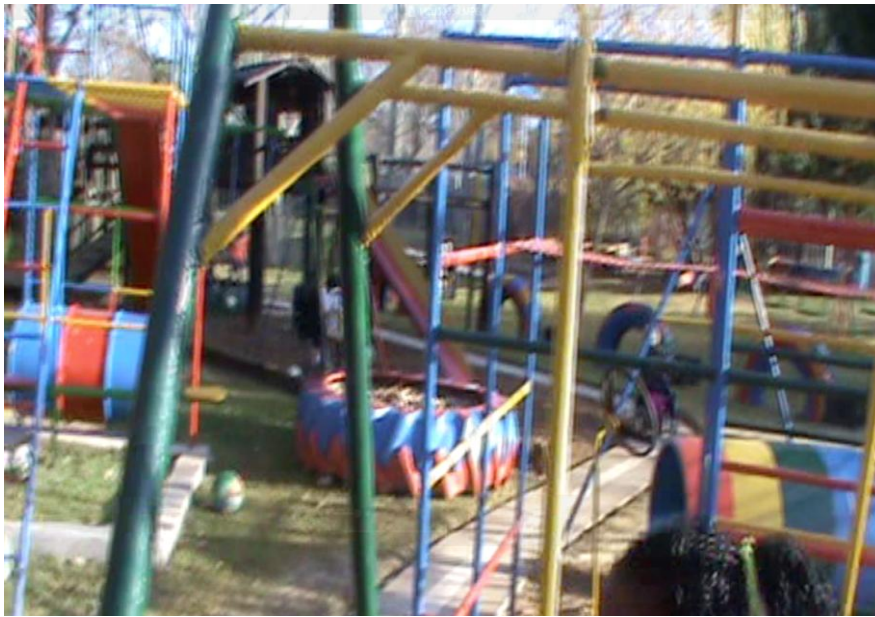
For Teacher Dee playing around freely outdoors was seen to be natural for “*children of this age*” because “*they learn when they play*” (Interview: 28/02/2013). This can be interpreted as contributing to children’s physical health, “well-being and well-becoming” (Kernan & Devine, 2010: 377). As Cannella (1977; 124) agrees that play in early childhood is seen to be a “sacred right of all children”. Play was therefore legitimated as significant for child development and learning because “*children of this age learn when they play*”. Teacher Dee thus produced images of children as becoming literate through play, as “*you have to teach through play, otherwise they don’t remember it...If you associate things like language and literacy through play – they remember it*” (Interview: 28/02/2013). Play was therefore positioned as contributing to cognitive development. The words “*you have to teach through play*” revealed the tensions that existed in terms of play and learning. On the one hand Teacher Dee positioned children as being in control of their learning when they engaged in outdoor free play activities; however this was in juxtaposition with the comment “*you have to teach through play*” where her role shifted to one where she was in control of teaching concepts and language skills through play.

By constructing the image of children as learning through play, Teacher Dee constructed herself as an expert because she had knowledge of how play contributed to children’s language and literacy skills, development and learning. This assumption then became a regime of truth that constructed play as a normalising practice for children’s development and learning. Power was thus ascribed to play because of the science of development and learning (Foucault, 1980). In positioning herself as an expert, Teacher Dee was able to justify the use of play and the different ways in which she organised and structured free play activities for children in her class.

Teacher Dee considered outdoor free play a space where children could “*play freely, under supervision obviously*” (Interview: 28/02/2013). My observations revealed that while outdoor free play was considered to be a place where children could ‘*play freely*’, it was still a highly regulated space where the norms for controlling children’s behaviour, children’s participation and construction of the school ready, literate child were evident. It was here that the productive nature of power was evident. However, while children were subjected to hierarchical observation and normalisation, they drew on different strategies for negotiating their personal autonomy to shape their everyday participation in the outdoor space. In doing this, they strategically contributed to their “own childhood and became part of the social and cultural construction process” (Markström & Halldén: 2008). The following analysis of classroom observations of outdoor free play reveals the tensions that existed between the teacher’s intentions and the children’s struggle for individual agency in the early childhood centre.

One hour was allocated to outdoor free play each day at Cheerful Tots. (See Chapter 5, Section 5.2.1 for greater detail on how time was structured for the different routines at the early childhood centre). During outdoor free play the children could choose the resources they wanted to play with, the children they wanted to play with and how they wanted to play. Teacher Dee and the helpers at the centre constantly walked around observing children’s activities and their participation during their outdoor free play. The photographs below are illustrations of the outdoor space and the resources that were available to the children at the centre. The kinds of materials and resources offered in the outdoor free play space provides an illustration of how the space was intentionally planned to ensure that children develop and learn through play.

**FIGURE 6.3: OUTDOOR PLAY SPACE AT CHEERFUL TOTS ECC**



The photographs show how the outdoor space was designed for children to participate as a collective. This is evident in the following utterance:

*“They play ball, they hang on the jungle gym, they slide, and they play games with balls, hoops or any other equipment. We check that children are playing with each other, taking turns, interacting, that sort of thing” (Interview 28/02/2014).*

Participating as a collective and playing on equipment designed for the development of physical and perceptual skills are examples of some of the elements of the dominant discourse of child development. The utterance *“We check that children are playing with each other, taking turns, interacting, that sort of thing”* reveals how

Teacher Dee moved back and forth between giving children control of their free play whilst still maintaining control of their development, learning, behaviour and participation. The panoptic gaze of the teacher enabled assessment of behaviour, learning, development and participation as Teacher Dee was able to “*check that children are playing with each other, taking turns, interacting, that sort of thing*”. Play thus became a normalising practice that worked to produce the becoming child: a child that develops and learns through play.

This dominant discourse of play as being important for child development and learning was also restrictive to children’s individuality. During my observations of outdoor free play, I noticed how hierarchical observation and surveillance produced an embodied docility in the children. However, there were moments when the outdoor space often limited the teacher’s panoptic gaze and there were certain incidents that escaped her attention. The following excerpt is an example of how children attempted to achieve a sense of agency and personal autonomy in their interactions with one another:

*It was outdoor free play and all the children were playing outside. Some of the children were playing in the sandpit, others were playing on the jungle gym and swings and others were playing with their bicycles. Monama and Rachel were playing in the sandpit. They were talking to each other in Sesotho. Teacher Dee walked out of the classroom into the outdoor space and began talking to the children who were riding their bicycles. When Monama and Rachel heard Teacher Dee’s voice, they immediately started speaking to each other in English. (Observation: 16/05/2013).*

The teacher’s presence was enough to convince the two girls that while she had not seen them, they could be heard. Foucault (1977: 187) asserts that “it is the fact of being constantly being seen, of always able to be seen, that maintains the disciplined individual in his subjection”. The children were both subject to the regulations of the classroom and to their own “conscience or self-knowledge, which ‘knows’ what it means to be a ‘good’ student (Grant, 2006: 104). The contemporary discourse of English as a legitimated language for learning within the classroom context had significant consequences for the literate subjectivities of bilingual children and the different ways in which they mediated the social relations of their

everyday learning. The two girls recognised the importance of being able to speak in Sesotho as it was a means of communication and helped to develop interpersonal relationships and solidarity with their peers. They had thus acquired the understanding that Sesotho was used for communicative purposes with members of the same race and people who could speak Sesotho.

The teacher's presence immediately prompted a switch over to English, which they had come to realise, was the legitimated language of the classroom and of learning. By switching over to English, the girls reinforced the hegemony of English as the language for learning by strategically conforming to the hegemonic practice of 'English only'. They learnt that in order to be accepted and constructed as 'good' literate learners they needed to develop an English subjectivity. Through constant negotiation, taking up and resisting of certain power structures in the classroom, the children displayed self-governance or a technology of the self where their thoughts, conduct and ways of being were transformed in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection or immortality (Foucault, 1998: 18). This is indicative of the productive nature of power as the children learnt how to negotiate and exchange one form of linguistic capital for another as they engaged in a variety of literacy practices across the different social fields: Sesotho with their peers and English with the teacher (Thompson, 1991). The children had also mastered the rules of the outdoor space and they had become skilful at identifying slips in the teacher's attention in a sort of "reverse surveillance" (Gallagher, 2011: 267).

#### **6.4.3 Teacher-directed outdoor play**

For Teacher Shari outdoor teacher directed play was considered a 'normal' practice as she was working within pre-determined curriculum goals as determined by the training that she received, the principal at the centre and the other teachers at the school (See Chapter 5, Section 5.5.1). As she said in the semi-structured interview:

*Yes I was taught that children must play every day...we train them how to catch a ball, walk in a straight line, running, catching... how to use their bodies. [I do this] everyday but maybe when it rains we do it inside. Teacher Thelma also shows us what we must teach everyday...She helps us with planning for outside play...we have balls, hoops, skipping ropes and we use this for outside play...we all plan together...so we all teach the same thing.*

As part of the early childhood centre, Teacher Shari spoke the discourse of teacher-directed outdoor play as being important in order to meet these pre-determined goals - play must happen every day, the principal helps them with planning outdoor activities and all the teachers plan together so that they all teach the same thing. As a teacher-directed activity, children's play positioned Teacher Shari as the expert as she was in control of children's play and the outcomes for learning. This enabled tighter regulation in respect of what children were learning and how they were learning. However, at the same time, Teacher Shari was also the object of the disciplinary gaze as she was confined within the expectations and judgements of the principal and the other teachers at the centre (Foucault, 1977).

The curriculum goals were situated within the discourse of child development and school readiness where children were exposed to various adult defined "pre-literacy and pre-numeracy activities" as well as learning how to "function successfully in institutional settings of a classroom" (Ailwood, 2003: 293). The development of these skills was considered a necessary and an "intimate companion to cognitive growth, emotional and intellectual faculties" (Burrows & Wright, 2010: 172). As Teacher Shari said:

*...at this age they learn when they play... like when they talk to each other and play with each other... like speaking and listening to their friends. When they play games and sing songs, count, say poems they are learning English. But they also learn how to play nicely with their friends (Interview: 01/03/2013).*

Outdoor teacher-directed play became a normalising practice for the achievement of the curriculum goals framed within child development and school readiness.

In the construction and disciplining of the literate body/mind, certain linguistic habits and embodied practices were transmitted to children in the form of indirect surveillance. The following is an example of how learners became acculturated into the linguistic and normalising practices as embodied by the teacher during their outdoor play. The teacher targeted the children's bodies to inscribe and regulate the docile body in preparation for their transition to school (Foucault, 1977).

*Teacher Shari: Line up...girls and boys... We are going outside to learn for a bit...we are going to run and jump and play for a bit. Ok now line up quickly!*

*The children moved towards the doorway and began form a disorderly, haphazard and noisy line. Some children were still lingering in the classroom whilst others were talking to each other. Teacher Shari stood at the doorway without saying anything. She folded her arms and looked at the children. The children began to quieten down, moved into the line and waited for her to lead them into the play area (Observation: 31:07:2013).*

Foucault (1980: 155) argues that the power is exercised through hierarchical observation and indirect surveillance:

There is no need for arms, physical violence, material constraints. Just a gaze. An inspecting gaze, a gaze for which each individual under its weight will end by interiorising to the point that he is his own overseer, each individual thus exercising this surveillance over, and against, himself. A superb formula: power exercised continuously and for what turns out to be a minimal cost.

This indirect surveillance targeted the children's bodies where particular postures, silences and visible signs of getting ready to learn outside are on display. The children line up, keep quiet and wait for the teacher to lead them outdoors and this becomes "the articulation and instantiation of a system of bodily discipline" (Luke, 1992: 119). The children had acquired the correct bodily habitus for what was considered important for participation in learning – lining up quietly and waiting for the teacher to take them to a specific space for learning. Teacher-directed outdoor play worked to construct a "whole analytical pedagogy" which was required for the "construction and discipline of a bodily and linguistic habitus" (Foucault, 1977: 159; Luke, 1992; 124). The following excerpt is an example of how teacher directed play was used as a normalising practice for the development of locomotor and manipulative skills that were considered necessary for the construction of the school ready literate child. It also reveals how outdoor play was organised in a way that children's movements and bodies could be regulated, monitored and governed (Foucault, 1977).

*In the outdoor space, Teacher Shari organised the children into groups. The groups were then encouraged to play with the equipment laid out viz. balls,*

*skipping ropes and hoops. The children could choose the equipment they wanted to play with and the children they wanted to play with. Once the children had finished playing in their groups, they had to carry out different motor and perceptual activities such as balancing, jumping over objects, running up and down the slides etc.*

The intention of this activity was to ensure that children acquired the normative set of gross and fine motor skills required for their age, which are considered important skills needed to become school ready. The following photographs show some of the activities that the children were involved in during their outdoor play.

**FIGURE: 6.4 TEACHER DIRECTED OUTDOOR PLAY**



The photographs show how teacher-directed play was structured for the development of fine and gross motor skills like locomotion, balance, co-ordination and manipulation. These skills are considered important for the development of the

reading and writing child. The photographs illustrate how the children had become docile where they were physically organised to facilitate surveillance by the teacher. Teacher Shari was able to regulate children's posture, their movements and participation through surveillance. The children knew that they were being watched and began to internalise the disciplinary gaze by watching each other as they completed their outdoor activities. The children had thus become self-regulated.

## **6.5 Conclusion**

In summary, I have examined everyday classroom literacy practices, the kinds of literate children these practices engendered and its normalising effects on children. In the analysis of everyday classroom literacy practices, I have conceptualised literacy practices as a means of constructing the school ready, literate child through regimes of truth based on the norms of child development and school readiness (Foucault, 1977). Within these contexts children were regulated and normalised into becoming school ready. Early literacy training was therefore highly 'panoptic' where children were under constant surveillance to monitor and normalise their progress towards development, learning and school readiness. However, during this process of normalisation children also began to regulate themselves, the teachers and their peers.

In this chapter, I have looked at the different ways in which every day literacy pedagogical practices were used in the construction of the school ready, literate child "not as an additional or adjacent part, but as a mechanism that is inherent to it." (Foucault, 1977: 176). Teacher-directed and child-initiated pedagogical practices were considered best practice for enhancing child development, learning and getting the child school ready. Teacher-directed pedagogical practices thus served to form a functional, hierarchical and analytical space at both the centres (Foucault, 1977). The kinds of activities and resources chosen during teacher-directed practice served two main functions: individualisation of children's learning and the construction and normalisation of the school ready, literate child. Under the classificatory eye of the teachers, children were classified and ranked in terms of the knowledge and skills that were required to become school ready. The discourse of play was rationalised as being important for both the development and learning and development of young children. However, both the teachers structured play differently and this was as a result of the context within which teaching and learning occurred.

Throughout the chapter I have shown how different literacy pedagogical practices have been used as technologies of power such as hierarchical observation, normalising judgements and assessment to regulate and e children based on the norms of child development and school readiness. I have also shown how in the process of normalisation, children begin to regulate and govern themselves, thereby displaying individual agency and autonomy.

## Chapter 7

### Conclusions: Explorations of literacy as social practice in early childhood centres

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*The only real voyage of discovery consists not in seeking new landscapes, but in having new eyes (Marcel Proust: 1923).*

#### 7.1 Introduction

The focus of this inquiry into literacy as social practice in early childhood centres and hence seeing things with ‘new eyes’ was prompted by three significant personal experiences. Firstly, my experiences in teaching young children between the ages of 6 and 9 which I found rewarding and satisfying but quite often regulatory. Secondly, the shifts in early childhood policy in South Africa, which views early childhood education as a vehicle through which the “creation of a society founded on human rights” that recognises the “centrality of childhood...and children as individual and citizens” (Department of Education, 2001a; 2001b). Thirdly, my experiences of working as a teacher educator at a higher education institution led me to re-think my ‘truths’ about what constituted teaching, learning and children in early childhood education. This was as a result of conversations that I had with students who spoke about the complexities of teaching in a highly regulated and monitored space. Students spoke about how teachers seemed to focus on the teaching of autonomous literacy skills with very little meaning making on the part of children. Others spoke about how the focus seemed to be on teaching to policy imperatives. I often wondered why was it that despite significant reform initiatives such as programmes for enhancing school quality, quality teaching, reading development and curriculum coverage, children’s literacy levels are still low across all language groups and across all phases of the education system (See: Spaul, 2013; Malda; Nel & van de Vijver, 2014). These three personal experiences became the catalyst for my ‘voyage of discovery...in seeing things with ‘new eyes’ to make visible literacy as social practice in early childhood centres.

When I began this research project, I set out to understand and detail early childhood teachers’ discourses of literacy as social practice to enable an

understanding of how discourse shapes literacy practices and what were the effects of constructing literacy as social practice in this way. Specifically I was interested in the ways in which discourse constitutes knowledge, together with the associated social practices, forms of subjectivity and the power relations, which are inherent in such knowledge and the relations between them. I thought that if I was able to generate interpretations of how literacy discourses were implicated in the production of how literacy, children, teaching and learning were conceptualised, then this might bring to light the different ways by which certain knowledge, concepts and ways of being literate were legitimated or marginalised through different discursive practices. Furthermore, I thought that if particular ways of being literate were seen to be repeatedly constituted as dominant and normative, I could question the extent to which the government's aspirations for transformation, social justice and equity could be advanced and achieved in early childhood education (Department of Education, 2001a; 200b).

This chapter provides a synthesis of the different components of the research process to generate some interpretations of the study. It draws the theoretical, the methodological and the empirical study together to deepen understandings into literacy as social practice in early childhood centres for 3-4 year olds. The implications and significance of the study are clarified. The chapter concludes with suggestions of the way forward for future research directions.

## **7.2 Re-tracing the research process: Significance of the study**

The key research question that informed this study was:

- How can literacy as social practice be made visible in early childhood centres for 3-4 year olds?

I explored post-foundational research and post-structural theory on literacy to understand how literacy as social practice was conceptualised, understood and practised. I examined studies that considered literacy itself as a discourse and literacy as both a social and discursive practice. From this, I was able to make sense of how literacy was a historically, socially and politically constructed field of knowledge and practice that consisted of a range of discourses embedded in social, academic and institutional relationships (Foucault, 1972, 1980; Gee, 2014).

### **A theoretical mix: The nexus between literacy as social practice and discourse.**

From my explorations of literacy as a social and discursive practice, I was able to:

- Identify and combine theoretical concepts, which generated 'new ways' of thinking about literacy as social practice.

I started with an examination of studies situated within New Literacy Studies (NLS), which was originally introduced in the early 1990s through the work of Gee (1990) and Street (1993). NLS is based on the premise that literacy practices are always and already embedded in particular forms of social activity and that one cannot define literacy or its uses in a vacuum (Prinsloo & Baynham, 2008). Two key concepts drawn from NLS had particular significance for my study: the literacy event and literacy practices.

The concept, literacy event refers to “occasions in which written language is integral to the nature of participants’ interactions and their interpretive processes and strategies” (Heath, 1983: 50). It relates to any observable situation where reading and writing or any related semiotic system plays a role. For the purpose of this study, the literacy event enabled an understanding of the observed action; the meanings the early childhood teachers gave to those actions and the ideologies underpinning those actions.

The concept of literacy practices relate to a more general sociocultural framing that gives meaning to the act (Street, 1984). Literacy practices are used to describe how patterns of actions observed in the literacy event are related to broader and social models that people bring to the event and the meanings they attach to them (Street, 1984; Barton, 2006). Using the concept of literacy practices gave me a lens to make sense of the literacy event, the knowledge and assumptions about the literacy event and the social and cultural models regarding the nature of the literacy event. It is in the connection between the literacy event, which helps one to identify different ways of using literacy and literacy practices and the meanings of literacy in that situation that discourses become relevant. From my readings I was able to make sense of how, in any social situation, there are particular societal and institutional structures,

hegemonic policies and practices and different discourses that render certain literacies more powerful than others.

To understand how literacy practices were imbued with relations of power, I needed to find a theoretical link between NLS and discourse theory. My readings in post-foundational research facilitated an understanding of literacy practices as social and situated, dependent on literacy related as well as broader social and cultural meanings, values and representations (Street, 1995; Barton, 2006). From this definition, I made the inference that discourses are part of this social conceptualisation of literacy. Therefore, for the purpose of my research, I see literacy as both a social and discursive practice.

Foucault's concept of discourse was used as an overarching analytical construct in my study. Foucault sees discourse as a group of statements that provide a language for speaking about something i.e. representing a particular kind of knowledge (Foucault, 1972). As a component of discourse, these statements are interrelated with systems of knowledge, which can be seen as effects of particular relations of power, that work to "constitute the objects of which they speak" (Foucault, 1972: 49). As Florence (1994: 462) argues, Foucault's concept of discourse involves certain "conditions that enable people, according to true and false statements" to be constituted as subject or object. Subjects and objects are produced through discourse with the subject taking an active role in shaping the discourse (Foucault, 1988). Foucault's concept of discourse offered me a lens to understand the ways in which the early childhood teachers' discourses of literacy as social practice connected, competed and collided to constitute themselves and the literate subject.

As a socially situated activity, literacy is always rooted in relations of power. In his genealogical work, Foucault focuses (1980; 1990) on the social functions of discourse in relation to power viz. how discourse functions in the production and articulation of power. Foucault (1990) understood discourse to be the space where power and knowledge intersect. It is in this intersection that different types of power produce different types of knowledge that become 'regimes of truth' (Foucault, 1977). The intersection between power/knowledge draws attention to the discourses that collude, collide and entangle individuals as "subjects of disciplines and in so

doing, recursively form subjectivities and practices” (Power, 2011:43). Foucault’s concept of power/knowledge and how it works to [re]construct discourses had significance for my study as certain discourses are “those points where it becomes capillary” and spreads out into other spaces (Foucault, 1980:98). Moreover, the “points where it becomes capillary” is made possible because of the dynamic relationship between power/knowledge (Ibid, 1980: 98).

This dynamic relationship between discourse and power involves technologies of power that produce knowledge. For example, in early childhood education, knowledge about how children learn, ‘effective’ pedagogical practices, what a literate child should be able to do etc. are examples and elements of discourses that permeate early childhood education and care. Early literacy classrooms are therefore spaces where power can be employed to observe and accumulate knowledge about children. Foucault (1988) argues that modern technology influences the kind of subject that is produced and this occurs through different but interconnected technologies that work to ‘train’...discipline make[s] individuals; it is the specific techniques of a power that regards individuals as both objects and as instruments of its exercise” (1977:170). In order to understand how children were trained to become disciplined literate bodies/minds, I looked at *how* disciplinary power worked and *what* it produced in early childhood centres for 3-4 year old children. I made use of Foucault’s (1977) disciplinary technologies of time, space, hierarchical observation, normalising judgements and the examination to understand how the literate child was brought into effect.

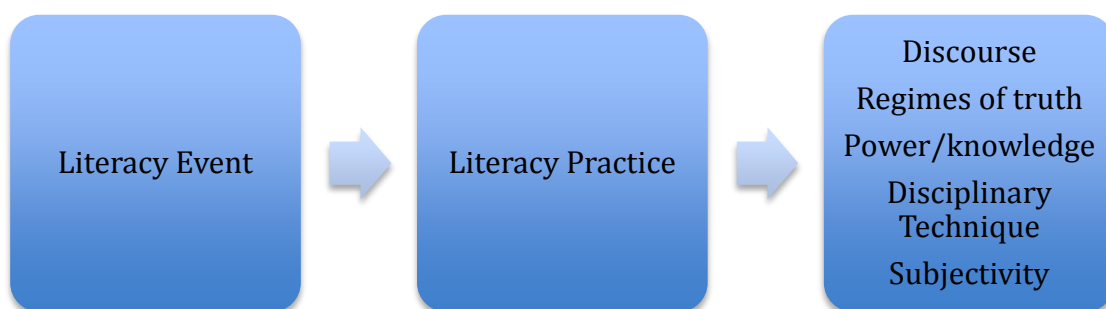
I was interested in the effects of the different modes of power/knowledge and their influence on construction of individuals as subject. Foucault’s (1982: 208) work on the self-constituting subject and “the different modes by which, in our culture, human beings are made subject” was useful for understanding how the participants were constructed through the discursive conditions created within the context of the early childhood centres. It provided an understanding of how individuals are transformed into subjects by:

- i) knowledge or the rules of discursive practice;
- ii) means of power; and

iii) the ways in which they turn themselves into subjects (Foucault, 1982; Ball, 2013).

The threads that I have explored above, map the theoretical framework that can be used to research literacy as social practice in early childhood education. Theoretical concepts drawn from NLS and Foucault's work on discourse, power/knowledge, technologies of discipline and subjectivity facilitated 'new ways' of thinking about how literacy as a body of knowledge was constructed, how these constructions influence practice and how this construction works to produce individuals as subjects. Foucault (1982) asserts that discourse constructs individuals as subjects in two ways: as subject to someone else through regulation and restraint, and as a subject tied to one's own identity by self-knowledge. "Both meanings suggest a format of power that subjugates and makes subject to" (Foucault, 1982: 212). Embedded within discourses are complex power/knowledge relationships and disciplinary technologies such as hierarchical observation, assessment, temporal and spatial regulation etc. The diagram below shows how the concepts drawn from NLS studies and Foucault's work on discourse can be used to research literacy practices in early literacy classrooms.

**Figure 7.1 The relationship between NLS and discourse**



The theoretical framework described above calls for a dialectical relationship with a methodology that supported an understanding of how literacy as social practice is constructed through discursive and institutional practices.

## **The discursive practice of research: Nexus between theory and methodology**

I started with the assumption that methodology in a PhD study is not just a descriptive account of the methodological orientation, sample and site, methods of data collection and analysis. Rather, it requires critical engagement and being sensitive to theoretical perspectives, research approaches, the data generation and data analysis process. I therefore set a methodological question to allow for this critical engagement with theory and method: *What are the discursive practices that inform research in literacy as social practice in early childhood centres for 3-4 year olds?*

I started with the assumption that the discursive practices that inform research in literacy as social practice are shaped by the positionality of the researcher and the lenses that one brings to bear on context and realities under study. Working within a post-structural framework requires a constant examination of one's positionality at different points of the research process. I had to be aware of how my subjectivity shaped the research process right from the choice of research topic through to the ways in which I presented my data. As part of the research process, I gave visibility to how I gained access to the research site, the choice of participants, the data generation methods that I used and the ways in which I analysed my data. Throughout the research process, I discussed the complexities and challenges I experienced together with the opportunities I made use of to construct my 'game of truth' (Gauthier, 1998: 15).

Because this study aimed to problematise literacy as social practice to facilitate an understanding of early childhood teachers' discourses and its effects, a qualitative research approach was considered most suitable. Qualitative research facilitated an understanding of the complexities, contradictions and difficulties of the early childhood teachers' social world thereby developing a "detailed understanding of a central phenomenon" (Creswell, 2012: 45). As the researcher working within a post-structural framework, I needed to make conscious intellectual moves to ensure a close link between methodology and theory. My decision to explore literacy as social practice through both an ethnographic and a genealogical approach to discourse analysis afforded a lens to explore how everyday literacy practices were constituted within historically constructed discourses and how these historical constructions worked to produce particular regimes of truths about children, teaching, learning etc.

Combining ethnographic tools of observation and semi-structured interviews with Foucault's genealogical tools of discourse, power/knowledge and subjectivity made it possible to unpack how and why certain literacy practices were legitimated whilst others were silenced and the effects of this on the discursive formation of the subjects in the study. Whilst Foucault did not outline a process for doing discourse analysis, he did provide strategies and concepts that one can use when doing a genealogical approach to discourse analysis (Foucault, 1972; 1978; 1984). A genealogical approach to discourse analysis enabled understandings of how certain regimes of truth are produced and sustained over time. I was able to make sense of how power circulates in "the production of discourses and knowledge, and their power effects" (Carabine, 2001:276).

The approach that I used to analyse my data provided tools for exploring how seemingly ordinary literacy events and literacy teachers in early childhood classroom can, and do, privilege and legitimate some truths over others. The construction of literacy, children, learning and teaching in normalising ways and its repetitive positioning historically and in the present day point to the number of ways in which different discourses converge and are advanced in early literacy education.

### **The discursive construction of literacy as social practice.**

The first of my data analysis chapters was based on exploring my research sub-question: *what are the early childhood teachers' discourses that inform literacy as social practice and what are their effects?* The semi-structured interviews were analysed using a genealogical approach to discourse analysis. This analysis showed how the teachers' utterances enabled 'rules or forms to become manifest' to "constitute the objects of which they speak" (Foucault, 1972: 99, 49). The discourses that informed literacy as social practice included: *literacy as skill, the good teacher, the becoming child and the good teacher.*

For both the teachers, literacy was constructed as a skill: it was about the development of listening, speaking, reading and writing. This dominant discourse of literacy had its historical roots in the teachers' earliest experiences of becoming literate, the training programmes they were exposed to and personal experiences of teaching. An analysis of semi-structured interview texts showed that the literate child was constructed in a particular way with specific skills and competencies as

well as visible sign systems, which were couched in the dominant discourses of child development and readiness. A child was constructed as being ready for learning and ready for school if they possessed certain knowledge and skills and conformed to expected and predicted subjectivities and characteristics of the school environment (Evan, 2013). The construction of the literate subject shows how the discourses of child development and readiness converged to form regimes of truth that worked to define and produce the image of the becoming child. For example, the teachers talked about children needing “*to develop into a more holistic learner*” and the importance of getting children “*ready for Grade R and the next class*”.

Through these discursive rules, the role of the teacher was produced in a particular way. The scientificity of child development and school readiness gave legitimacy to the role of the teacher and to their work as early childhood teachers. Power as (Foucault, 1980) maintains was assigned to the teachers because they had knowledge of what constituted literacy, how children become literate and best practice to support the development of the school ready literate child. This power/knowledge nexus worked to produce the subjectivity of the good early childhood teacher. The subjectivity of the good early childhood teacher further legitimated the work of the teacher as being about getting the child ready for school.

The importance of the role of the teacher in getting the child ready for school enabled them to speak these regimes of truth or discursive rules into existence. However, these regimes of truth were not widely known or understood. Parents were seen as ‘problems’ because “*they don’t help in the afternoons*” and “*they think it is only my job*”. The distinction between parents (who don’t help) and the early childhood teachers (they think it is only my job) is another technology for assigning importance and status to the subjectivity of the good early childhood teacher. Because the teachers had this knowledge, the subjectivity of the good early childhood teacher was further legitimated and their work as early childhood teachers was positioned as valuable and worthwhile. This power/knowledge nexus enabled the teachers to speak into existence the good parent. Parents were constituted as ‘good’ if they had knowledge of the importance of early childhood education, child development, spoke English at home and inculcated healthy eating habits in their children.

The discourses converged to produce particular disciplinary and normalising effects, which enabled the teachers to bring into effect what was *sayable* about literacy, children, teachers and parents (Foucault, 1977; 1991). The construction of literacy as a skill had particular effects for the subjectivities and subject positionings of the early childhood teachers, children and parents. In constructing the subjectivity of the good teacher, the good parent and the becoming child, certain ways of seeing, thinking and acting were normalised, thereby creating silences, deficits and a reductionist view of literacy, parents and children. For example, the discursive construction of the becoming child leads to children being ranked and classified against the norm of child development and readiness, which sets the norm: “what...is normal or not, correct or not, in terms of what one must do or not do” (Foucault, 2000: 59). By valorising the becoming child as a truth object, there is a failure to recognise the “complexity and multiplicity of who, how and where we become” (Giugni, n.d.: 1).

Focusing on complexity and multiplicity is important within the South African context as ECD is seen as a vehicle through which the inherited social, economic, and apartheid ideological system and vast material divisions based on race; gender and social class can be broken down (Department of Basic Education, 2001b). By “constructing particular versions of the world and by positioning subjects within them in particular ways, discourses limits what can be said and done” (Willig, 2008:117). As a result these constructions militate against social justice, equity and transformation in early childhood education as these constructions inform “understandings of the subject and therefore who the object of the gaze should be” (MacNaughton, 2000: 236). Creating a gaze with children as its object is fundamental for equity, transformation and social justice in early childhood education. However, the object of the gaze requires a re-conceptualisation from the ordered, predictable, consistent or individual becomings of children to a focus on the multiplicities and complexities of who, how and where children become. This will open up new possibilities for how we think about children, teaching and learning in early childhood education. I am not suggesting that we replace child development and readiness ways of knowing and doing literacy, but I am suggesting that we expand our knowledge base to include new ways of thinking about how individuals become and the role they play in their own becoming. Therefore an in-depth

understanding of discourse, power/knowledge and subjectivity in early childhood literacy is needed to see how individuals are positioned and position themselves within particular discourses, how these positionings are implicated in power relations between individuals and how these discourses have shifting effects for individuals (MacNaughton, 2000).

The discourses that informed literacy as social practice gave direction and purpose to what and how the teachers did what they did in their literacy classrooms. To explore early childhood teachers' discourses of literacy as social practice and their effects on classroom practice, I used a two-part question to guide my analysis: *How have the early childhood teachers' discourses of literacy as social practice informed their practices at the centres and what are their effects?* Observations of classroom literacy practices were analysed using a genealogical approach to discourse analysis.

### **Discourses as regimes of temporal and spatial regulation**

In the first of the chapters that explored classroom practice, I looked at how time and space were used as key disciplinary techniques, which formed part of everyday classroom literacy practices. Through different temporal and spatial configurations, children's behaviours, and bodies were intensively regulated and subjected to intensive training so that the "articulation and instantiation of a system of bodily discipline" was guaranteed (Luke, 1992: 119). When children failed to comply with rules for behaviour or failed to demonstrate the correct instantiation of bodily discipline for early literacy, they were ranked and classified as not knowing or needing extra support. Consequently, pedagogical practices were closely linked to bodily training or preparing children to participate fully in different spaces and in different times.

The teachers used different strategies and techniques to ensure that children fully participate in different activities. For example, the teachers controlled the school day through a timetable, which allowed them to "extract time and labour from bodies", (McHoul & Grace, 1993: 69). They made use of highly ritualised classroom routines, different activities and the breaking down of activities into set periods of time to bring the disciplined, literate child into effect. Children were constantly subject to 'correct' bodily and behavioural rules and expectations such as how to

position their bodies, their gaze, how to manipulate objects etc. so that they could complete a task with efficiency and speed (Foucault, 1977). The analysis revealed how through the control of the activity, children were trained to function optimally thereby bringing into effect the becoming child (Foucault, 1977: 149-156).

Literacy practices across both the early childhood sites in my study discursively constructed 'correct' bodily literacy habits and conduct by distributing and delimiting space for children's bodies in particular ways. Foucault claims that distributing bodies in space by arranging, locating, separating and ranking them is a form of disciplinary power (Foucault, 1977). By these procedures the literate child 'knows one's place' in the general economy of space associated with disciplinary power (McHoul & Grace, 1993:69). Foucault's technique of enclosure revealed how the early childhood centre was used to discipline the literate body and mind "through discipline, learning, development, maturation and skill" (Holloway & Valentine, 2000:11). Each space was partitioned so that children's bodies could be managed and controlled. It was here that literacy learning was enhanced through "knowing, mastering and using," (Foucault, 1977: 145). Each of these spaces constitutes functional sites that were used for specific purposes and designed to shape and train the literate learner in normalising ways (Wright, 2000). Distributing children into different spaces with different functions became the means through which "supervising, hierarchising, rewarding" took place (Foucault, 1977: 147). Children in the study were categorised and classified according to age, ability and gender.

Whilst children were subjected to temporal and spatial regulation, they were also regulated by a universal, pre-determined timetable of child development and school readiness. For example, the teachers provided a rationale for making use of a highly routinised and structured timetable by saying that children needed to feel safe and secure in a predictable environment. However, these routines also functioned to control children in the different spaces and at different times of the school day. Children therefore became subject to the temporal and spatial regulation imposed on them by the timetable and the different spaces in the 3-4 year old space. Through this regulation, children began to understand how school operated and they began to learn who they were becoming in relation to school readiness and child development discourse. Once they knew the routines, they began to discipline and manage their

learning and behaviour during the school day. Children were thus constructed and constructed themselves into school subjects through what Foucault (1988) called technologies of the self. Ironically, the more that children were subjected to and subjected themselves to the temporal and spatial regulation of the school day, the more it produced and classified children who were considered outside of the norm of school readiness and child development discourse.

Child development and school readiness discourse made *sayable* regimes of truth about what constituted literacy, learning and children based on developmental timelines that defined and produced a 'normal' child. These regimes of truth also bring into effect what was *sayable* in relation to assessment of children and their learning in relation to developmental and school readiness milestones. Children who had not acquired these milestones were subjected to regular intervention such as continuous observation, extra English classes, teacher-directed activities, speech therapy etc. Regular intervention thus became the means through which children's developmental and school readiness skills, knowledge and behaviours for their particular age could be achieved (Foucault, 1977). Therefore, the early childhood classroom and the early childhood period can be considered a highly panoptic time and space where the developmental and school readiness gaze of the teacher defined and produced what is considered normal viz. the becoming child. However, whilst the teachers subject children to continuous surveillance, they were also subjected to surveillance from the parents, the principals at the centres and other teachers. As Foucault notes:

...the technologies of domination of individuals over one another have recourse to processes by which the individual acts upon himself. And conversely...the technologies of the self are integrated into structures of coercion or domination" (1993: 203).

The discourses of child development and school readiness worked not only to produce the subjectivity of the becoming child but also worked to regulate the teachers and their work. The early childhood space was therefore a highly regulated space that worked to produce both the teacher and the becoming child through the temporal and spatial organisation of the classroom and the early childhood centre. Teachers were expected to organise their classrooms in particular ways and make

use of particular literacy practices to maximise learning and development of the young child.

### **Discourses as regimes of everyday classroom literacy practices**

In the second data analysis of classroom observations I examined everyday classroom literacy practices and the effects of these practices on children and their learning. The teachers made use of either teacher-directed or child-initiated activities, which were considered best practice for enhancing child development and school readiness. Teacher-directed activities comprised of the early morning ring, small group teaching, whole class teaching and outdoor play whilst child-initiated activities consisted of indoor and outdoor free play.

The early morning ring, small group and whole class teaching time were a highly regulated and intensely controlled pedagogical space at both the early childhood centres. The early morning ring time at both the centres was a means of literacy training to get children to become self-regulated and get ready for learning. It entailed disciplinary technologies for the cognitive mastery of a set of autonomous skills and knowledge as well as bodily training. During the early morning ring, literacy training comprised mainly of “*listening and looking at the teacher*”, keeping their “*mouths closed*” and not “*talking to your friends*”. It was during this pedagogical time that the disciplinary technology of hierarchical observation and surveillance were “integrated into the teaching relationship” (Foucault, 1977: 175). The teachers judged children’s participation in the literacy event by reading children’s bodies. The subjectivity of the child was “re-established as a collective identity” where movement and silences were marked onto the child’s body and mind in relation to the other children in the group (Luke, 1992: 123).

Small group and whole class teaching functioned as a “disciplinary apparatus” that made it possible for teachers to observe details of children’s behaviours and activities. Small group and whole class teaching were thus a highly regulated and highly controlled pedagogic space that functioned as a “whole “analytical space” by determining procedures aimed at “knowing, mastering and using” (Foucault, 1977:143). The topic or concept to be taught during small group and whole class teaching time was broken down into elements. The teachers taught the concept, questioned the children to check for understanding, demonstrated what she wanted

the children to do and observed the children as they completed their tasks. These highly ritualised literacy practices positioned the teachers “as the primary transmitter and constructor of knowledge” and the children as recipients” of that knowledge (Gutierrez & Larson, 1994: 27).

Small group and whole class teaching thus served as a “whole analytical pedagogy” where the double process of individualisation and normalisation came into effect (Foucault, 1977: 159). These literacy practices became the devices that made up “practical grids of specification for diagramming, classifying and categorising” the literate child (Foucault, 1988:18; 1972: 42). Children’s mental capabilities, behavioural characteristics and distinctive individual traits were reduced and fixed to a norm-based child development and school readiness discourse. Small group and whole class teaching thus embodied sameness of children where individuality and individual differences were defined and produced. Small group and whole class teaching, which pre-supposed sameness in relation to children’s development, learning and readiness for school also worked to define and produce individual differences. This made it possible to measure children, their individual performances and their deviation or conformity to the universal norm of child development and school readiness. This brought into effect the becoming child who was either working within or outside the norm of child development or school readiness.

The discourse of play was regarded as best practice as it provided the means through which teachers could ensure that children acquired the knowledge, skills and behaviours required for school whilst still maintaining their commitment to play based learning. The analysis of classroom observations revealed competing discourses of play that ranged from child-initiated to teacher-directed play. The teacher at Cheerful Tots considered child-initiated indoor and outdoor play to be the space where children should be given the freedom to do *whatever they want to do* because *it’s complete free play*. Whilst this could be construed as the privileging of free play and positioning of children as being in control of their development and learning, my observations revealed that child initiated play was a highly panoptic space. It was here that disciplinary technologies of hierarchical observation, normalisation and assessment were employed to bring the literate child into effect. Child-initiated play thus became a pedagogic strategy that was closely aligned to the curriculum content of school readiness. With school readiness as a benchmark indicator for the

development of the school ready, literate child, assessment and hierarchical observation thus became a normalising pedagogic practice during child-initiated free play.

At Universal ECC, outdoor teacher-directed play was a normalising literacy practice as the teacher was working towards achieving pre-determined curriculum goals that were strongly influenced by the training that she received; the principal at the centre and the other teachers at the centre. As a teacher-directed activity, children's play was highly regulated as the teacher was in control of children's play and the outcomes for learning. This enabled tighter regulation in respect of what children were learning and how they were learning. Outdoor play was organised for children's physical growth and development; cognitive development and the social and personal development of the young children at the different centres. While outdoor free play was a highly regulated and controlled space, it was also a space where children made use of different resources, managed their participation in collective and individual activities and managed their own regulation thus displaying a technology of the self and individual agency.

In summary, this study makes contributions **theoretically, methodically** and **empirically**. The theoretical framework and methodology employed in my study present a 'new approach' to studying literacy as social practice in early childhood centres for 3-4 year olds in the South African context. I made use of complementary theoretical frames drawn from New Literacy Studies and Foucauldian discourse theory (explained in greater detail in Chapter 2). The concepts of the literacy event and literacy practice drawn from New Literacy Studies had significance for the study. The literacy event is defined as any communicative event or situation that involves reading, writing or a piece of text (Heath, 1983). Literacy practices include the uses of reading and writing as well as the values, attitudes, social conventions, ideologies and cultural models that give meaning to the literacy event (Street, 1995; 2000; 2005). It is at this level that underlying discourses that shape the way literacy is practiced in a particular event becomes relevant. I made use of Foucault's concept of discourse where discourses is conceptualised as a group of statements which are sub-elements of discourse and provides a language for speaking about something, thereby constructing the subject or object (Foucault, 1972). Discourses are

interrelated with systems of knowledge and which can be seen as effects of particular relations of power, which work together to form a discursive formation/construction. To make sense of how discourse operates and what it produces viz. how individuals are constructed and how they construct themselves, Foucault's concepts of power/knowledge and subjectivity were particularly useful. The theoretical link between NLS and Foucauldian discourse theory enabled me to make theoretical moves from the literacy event to the literacy practice and finally to discourse.

Methodologically, my key contribution lies in the way in which I explored literacy as social practice by blending ethnography and a genealogical approach to discourse analysis. I combined ethnographic tools of semi-structured interviews and classroom observation with genealogical tools of discourse, power/knowledge and subjectivity to give visibility to literacy as social practice in early childhood centres for 3-4 year olds. I started with the assumption that the process of data generation and data analysis is non-linear, iterative and closely aligned. I therefore developed three steps that enabled a close analysis of the data:

- i) locating the objects of discourse;
- ii) recognising the discourse and tracing its constitution; and
- iii) constructions of subjectivity and subject positions.

Following Foucault (1980, 1998) I have employed technologies that allowed for the teachers' voices to be heard by outlining their actual responses and what they did in an exemplary and as close as possible to the 'truth'. This highlights a further methodological contribution that this study makes.

Empirically, this study has gone some way to give visibility to the dominant and taken-for-granted discourses that have historically worked to produce the subjectivity of the child and the early childhood teacher (Foucault, 1990). The study revealed that the teachers make use of the dominant discourse of literacy as an autonomous skill to construct the image of the becoming child. As a normative template, the becoming child draws its 'scientificity' from child development and school readiness discourse. The scientificity of child development and readiness discourse assigned

power to the teachers because they had the knowledge of what constituted literacy, children, learning and teaching. This knowledge worked to produce the subjectivity of the good early childhood teacher. In turn, the subjectivity of the good early childhood teacher legitimated the early childhood teachers' work as being about getting the child ready for school.

These discourses provided the teachers with particular kinds of knowledge that worked to produce the subjectivity of the literate child. The teachers made use of different kinds of pedagogical practices to produce the school ready literate child. These everyday classroom pedagogical practices which were either child-initiated, or teacher-directed. These practices acted as normative, regulated frameworks that structured the school day and gave legitimacy to the time, spaces and movements of the children and the teachers. In constructing the child as becoming, children's engagement and participation were relegated to the learning of specific autonomous skills required to become school ready, which are skills that are considered important within this context. However, in constructing the child as becoming, children's agency and participation in terms of their meaning-making and construction of learning were silenced. Within the early childhood context, this conceptualisation of literacy and children is problematic as these constructions position children as deficit. In addition children's capacities and the cultural and linguistic capital that they bring to the classroom are silenced. However, whilst children were subjected to intense regulation and normalisation, at different times and in different spaces, they began to regulate themselves, their peers and the teachers thereby showing individual agency and autonomy. This has implications for how children are conceptualised in early childhood policy and practice, viz. are they conceptualised as meaning-makers with capacity and agency or adults-in-the-making (the becoming child)?

### **7.3 The way forward: Possibilities for future research**

This research has gone some way to make visible literacy as social practice in early childhood contexts by looking at some of the dominant and taken-for-granted discourses that historically work to produce and continue to produce understandings of literacy, children, teaching and learning in early childhood education (Foucault 1990). New questions about how literacy is conceptualised and the effects of this on practice and children have been raised. The significance of the study as discussed in Section 7.2 indicate a number of possible ways forward for future research

directions that would continue conversations around literacy as social practice in early childhood contexts. Further research into the complexities of early childhood teachers' work in diverse contexts will add to new understandings about the work of the early childhood teacher. Research methodologies that focus on discourse, power/knowledge and subjectivity will provide valuable insights into literacy development in early childhood education. Future research directions are proposed in relation to early childhood policy, teacher education and the early childhood workforce.

### **7.3.1 Early childhood policy**

As argued in this thesis, ECD is regarded as playing a critical role in South Africa for the “creation of a society founded on human rights, which acknowledges the centrality of childhood...and children as individuals and citizens” (Department of Education, 2001b: 5). In addition ECD is seen as the foundation for democracy, equity and access to opportunities (Department of Education, 2001b). In post-democratic South Africa, a number of policies have been put into place to ensure the protection of the rights and needs of young children. Research both internationally and nationally have shown that policies are shaped by constructions of children and childhood (Moss & Petrie, 2002; Mitchell, 2012; Ebrahim, 2014). Given this, I argue that discourse analysis of South African ECD policy documents can provide some of understanding OF how “constructions of childhood shape possibilities for provision of ECD services” (Mitchell, 2012: 339). This should include government's views about the purpose of early childhood education, the outcomes of ECD, the role of children, ECD teachers/practitioners, families, government etc. The value of knowing society's goals for children, their needs and their rights opens up avenues for understanding how constructions of children have an influence on ECD provisioning and policy solutions (Mitchell, 2012).

This also opens up possibilities for understanding how policies construct literacy, literate children, and the professional identity of the early literacy teacher. Valuable questions to ask would include: *How is early literacy learning and teaching conceptualised in contemporary policy? What images of the literate child and children in general are located in early childhood policies? What ECD teacher subjectivities are called for through these images of children?* I believe that this process would provide understandings of how discourses shape policies, the kinds

of discourses that are legitimated and silenced in policy and how certain discourses might be disrupted.

### **7.3.2 Teacher education**

Research into pre-service teacher educator programmes would generate insight into how teacher education programmes are designed as well as the content of such programmes. This research has the potential to make sense of the discourses that shape teacher educators and pre-service teachers' thinking about literacy, children and early childhood education within a South African context. Studies that look at ECD course content and the discourses that pre-service teachers encounter in the ECD South African context will add to the growing body of work about what is privileged in ECD teacher education and how dominant discourses shape children, ECD teachers and practice in particular ways (Langford, 2007; 2010).

Genealogical discourse analysis would be a valuable tool to examine the dominant discourses, the silenced discourses or absences in the course content. Questions could include: *Which discourses are legitimated and silenced in ECD pre-service teacher education? What are the effects of these legitimations and silences on children, the ECD teacher, teaching and learning?*

Using a genealogical approach to discourse analysis of a pre-service teacher course content also opens possibilities for re-thinking early childhood pedagogical practice. Early childhood teachers plan for children's learning through particular lenses. Creating a gaze with children at the centre of the teaching and learning process is important to reconceptualising ways of equity, transformation and social justice in early childhood education (MacNaughton, 2000). Teacher education programmes need to focus on reconceptualising how we see and think about children from different perspectives. Some of these perspectives include:

- A lens that includes issues of diversity within the South African context. There needs to a focus on the intersection between race, gender, social class, language, ability and sexuality in early childhood education and the implications of these for pedagogical practice.
- A lens that looks at how children construct and experience power relationships in their relationships with one another, the early childhood

teacher and the school context.

- An “ethics of self” that brings into play how children are constructed and how they construct themselves as learners in ECD contexts (Foucault, 1983; 1988).
- An understanding of how discourse, power/knowledge and subjectivity in early childhood education positions children in particular ways and how discourses have shifting effects for individuals (MacNaughton, 2000).

Critical reflection and questioning of powerful knowledge and regimes of truth within the bounds of “existing discursive practices and resources” (MacNaughton, 2000: 243) will go some way to challenging existing regimes of truth. This opens up new spaces for thinking about how certain ways of thinking privilege particular ways of thinking about children, teaching and learning. Through such understandings pre-service teachers can use their pedagogical power with a better understanding of how pedagogy and power can be “either liberatory or subjugatory for children at particular moments in time and space” (MacNaughton, 2000:239).

### **7.3.3 The Early Childhood workforce**

Given the vast inequalities and complexities of the South African ECD context (Ebrahim, 2014; Atmore, 2013), there needs to be sustained research that focuses on the early childhood workforce. The government policy agenda calls for a trained workforce who knows about child development and knows how to plan for stimulating learning environments for the holistic development of young children (Department of Education, 2001b; 2009; 2012). However, Ebrahim (2014) and Biersteker (2012) maintain that early childhood workforce are lowly qualified and undertrained. Recognising its responsibility to provide a workforce that is adequately trained, the government of South Africa has put into place a number of training avenues. Some of these include the twinning of Further Education and Training colleges with training organisations who provide ECD related training, development of national qualification standards for ECD, development of further education and training certificates etc. (Human Sciences Research Council, 2014). Despite these systemic and policy issues a critical part of the ECD workforce trajectory is research.

Research that examines the experiences of the early childhood workforce is needed

to understand how training and context influences the professional identity of the early childhood teacher. In addition, research needs to focus on how training and context impact on the kinds of learning opportunities that are afforded to young children in different contexts. This research might go some way in giving voice to the importance of the professionalisation of the ECD workforce. Questions around the following could be asked: *What kinds of training opportunities have the teachers being exposed to? How does this training impact on their pedagogical practices? What are some of the contextual realities that impact on the kinds of learning opportunities afforded to young children?* This kind of research would promote an understanding of how teacher training, context and workplace experience intersect to promote/negate learning opportunities for young children.

#### **7.4 Limitations of the study**

One limitation of the study is that the sample size was small. However, although the number of participants in my study was small, the theoretical and methodological approach allowed for close examination of the teachers' talk and their practices in early literacy classrooms. The intention of my study was never to extrapolate findings to other contexts or to make broad generalisations, but rather to generate interpretations and map and locate the teachers' discourses and the effects of these discourses on literacy practices, teaching, learning and children. The aim was to explore how discourses are interrelated with systems of knowledge, together with social practices and power relations, which work together to form subjectivities of teachers, children and parents in particular ways.

A second limitation of this study is that it explored teachers' discourses of literacy as social practice and its effects on teaching, learning and young children. Therefore this study only provided perspectives from the point of view of the teacher. Given the link between teaching and learning, I maintain that it would have been beneficial to draw out children's experiences of their learning in early literacy classrooms. Further research on how children experience literacy, learning and teaching can provide a more holistic account of what children learn and how they become literate in early childhood classrooms. However, in generating understandings of early childhood teachers' discourses of literacy as social practice and its influences on their literacy practices and the effects of this on young children, I was able to draw attention to the nexus between discourse, power/knowledge and subjectivity. This is

an avenue that can be explored in future research from the perspective of young children.

## **7.5 Conclusion**

In this concluding chapter, I have provided an outline of the purpose of my study and highlighted the interconnectivity of the different chapters in the thesis. I started the chapter with a personal narrative, which had a direct influence on how the study was conceptualised. I shared my theoretical, methodological and empirical reflections and provided a way forward for further research.

This study contributes to an on-going research conversation that gives visibility to literacy as social practice in early childhood centres: seeing things with ‘new eyes’. The purpose of this study was not to seek answers or to provide knowledge on best literacy practices, instead, the early childhood teachers’ discourses of literacy were problematised to give visibility to the regimes of truth literacy that worked to produce the child, the early childhood teacher and literacy practices in particular ways. It is envisaged that this study makes a departure away from the regime of truth that constructs children and teachers to one way of being, acting, speaking and doing. To explore the complexities of the early childhood teachers’ discourses and the effects of these on children and practice, it was necessary, through the theoretical and methodological framework of the study to look at multiple ways of being and becoming literate. Embracing multiple ways of reading, identifying and rupturing dominant ways of thinking and speaking about literacy creates significant and necessary spaces for thinking about the different ways in which early literacy is socially and discursively constituted in early childhood centres for 3-4 year olds. It is in this space that we can advocate for social justice, transformation and equity for all children of South Africa.

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## **APPENDIX 1: LETTERS AND CONSENT FORMS**

1. EARLY CHILDHOOD CENTRE PRINCIPALS
2. EARLY CHILDHOOD TEACHERS
3. PARENTS OF CHILDREN AT THE EARLY CHILDHOOD CENTRE.

### **1. INFORMATION AND CONSENT FORM: PRINCIPAL: EARLY CHILDHOOD CENTRE**

Date:

Dear Principal

Re: Research into literacy as social practice

My name is Colwyn Martin and I am engaged in doctoral studies at the University of the Free State. I am a lecturer at the University of the Free State where my area of specialisation is early literacy.

I am investigating early childhood teachers' understandings of early literacy and how these perceptions relate to their classroom practice. This study is part of the European Union Project's where the intention is to enhance learning and teaching in early childhood education. In this first part of my project, I would like to interview teachers about their own literacy histories, the relationship between their own experiences (as literacy learners and parents of literacy learners) and their own literacy practices. I hope to focus intensively on early childhood teachers' literacy practices and observe their classrooms over a period of  $\pm$  3 months. The early childhood teachers' participation will be totally voluntary and I will assure them of confidentiality and anonymity if so requested.

The ultimate goal of this study is for the findings to make literacy education more relevant and responsive to context and participants. Through the study I hope to provide insights that will contribute to literacy research and practice within South Africa. I will be happy to address any questions or requests for more information, which you may have.

Please sign the form below if you are willing to grant permission for me to conduct the research in your early childhood centre.

Yours sincerely

Colwyn Martin

The signatory below grants permission for the abovementioned research to be carried out in early childhood classrooms at the centre.

.....

Principal

.....

Date

SCHOOL STAMP

## **2. INFORMATION AND CONSENT FORM: EARLY CHILDHOOD TEACHER**

Date: 14/02/2013

Dear Early Childhood Teacher

### **Re: Research into literacy as social practice**

My name is Colwyn Martin and I am engaged in doctoral studies at the University of the Free State. I am a lecturer at the University of the Free State where my area of specialisation is early literacy.

I am investigating early childhood teachers' understandings of early literacy and how these perceptions relate to their classroom practice. This study is part of the European Union Project's where the intention is to enhance learning and teaching in early childhood education.

In this first part of my project, I would like to interview you about your literacy history, the relationship between your own experiences (as literacy learners and parents of literacy learners) and your literacy practices. In the second part of the project, I hope to focus intensively on your literacy practice and observe your classrooms over a period of  $\pm$  3 months. These observations will be video recorded. In addition, photographs will be taken of you and the children as you go about your daily work.

Your participation will be totally voluntary and I will assure you of confidentiality and anonymity if so requested. The ultimate goal of this study is for the findings to make literacy education more relevant and responsive to context and participants. Through the study I hope to provide insights that will contribute to literacy research and practice within South Africa. I will be happy to address any questions or requests for more information which you may have.

Please sign the form below if you are willing to grant permission for me to conduct the research in your early childhood centre.

Yours sincerely

Colwyn Martin

**Consent to participate in the research project:**

**Making visible literacy as social practice for 3-4 year olds.**

I \_\_\_\_\_ consent to be part of the research project for the study on literacy as social practice in my classroom. I understand that:

- Participation in the interview is voluntary. I may refuse to answer any questions I do not wish to answer.
- I provide permission for Colwyn Martin to observe my literacy practices in my classroom.
- I give Colwyn Martin permission to videotape my face in the classroom and my classroom teaching.
- My literacy practices will be videotaped and I can have a copy of the videotape if I so wish.
- Information that may identify me will not be included in the research report and my responses will remain confidential. A pseudonym will be made use of. All data collected in the study will be securely stored in a locked file cabinet. None of the information collected, will have any bearing on my employment in this early childhood centre.
- I may withdraw from the study at any time. My decision to withdraw will not result in the loss of my job or any other benefits to which I am entitled. If I chose to withdraw all information pertaining to my participation in the study will be destroyed.
- 

.....  
Signed

Date: .....

### 3. CONSENT AND ASSENT FORM: PARENTS/GUARDIANS OF LEARNERS

University of the Free State

P.O. Box 339

Bloemfontein

9300

Date: 14/02/2013

Dear Parent

Re: Research into literacy as social practice

My name is Colwyn Martin and I am engaged in my doctoral studies at the University of the Free State. I am a lecturer at the University of the Free State where my area of specialisation is early literacy.

I am investigating early childhood teachers' understandings of early literacy and how these understandings relate to classroom practice. This study is part of the European Union Project's where the intention is to enhance learning and teaching in early childhood education. The study will involve observation of early childhood teachers' literacy practices in classrooms for 3-4 year olds. As part of the research, I will take some video/DVD recordings and photographs of the teaching and learning process and make copies of learners' activities. These recordings are a useful means of helping us understand how teachers teach and how learners learn. I would like to refer to these recordings, photographs and photocopies when I write up my thesis. I would also like to be able to show short clips from the videos to other researchers and students for research and academic purposes.

Your child **may** appear in some of the video clips and the photographs. Therefore your permission is required for the use of these materials in my study.

Confidentiality is assured; your child's name will not be used in any written or spoken reports. If you agree, please sign **BOTH** parts of the consent form below. One is for the use of the video material and one refers to the showing of the video material.

Yours faithfully

Colwyn Martin

**CONSENT AND ASSENT FORM**

Child's name.....

I consent to the use of video clips and photographs of my child and his/her written work being referred to in the thesis and research papers of Colwyn Martin. I understand that the material will be used for research purposes only. I understand that this agreement is voluntary.

Name: .....

Signature: ..... Date: .....

**PART 2** I consent to video clips and photographs of my child and his/her written work being shown to students and/or other researchers for the purposes of learning more about how children learn to read and write.





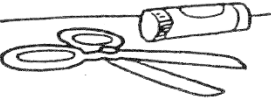

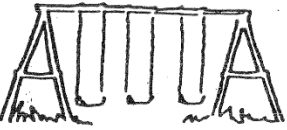



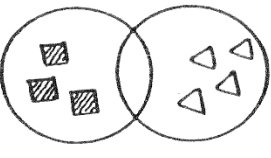
Name: .....

Signature: ..... Date: .....

## APPENDIX 2: EXAMPLES OF REPORT CARDS




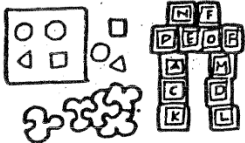

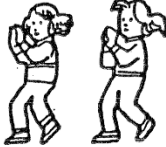
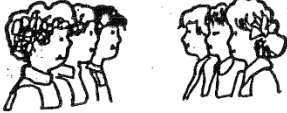



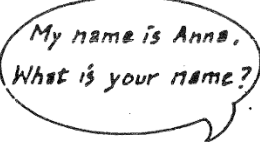
Length: \_\_\_\_\_

Weight \_\_\_\_\_

 <p>I follow school rules and procedures</p>	 <p>I share and play cooperatively</p>	 <p>I indicate positive feelings about myself</p>
<p> </p>	<p> </p>	<p> </p>
 <p>I sing familiar songs and rhymes</p>	 <p>I use tools and materials for construction</p>	 <p>I draw, paint, and color pictures.</p>
<p> </p>	<p> </p>	<p> </p>
 <p>I use outdoor play equipment</p>	 <p>I am interested in stories and books</p>	 <p>I am curious about my environment</p>
<p> </p>	<p> </p>	<p> </p>
 <p>I can associate related items</p>	 <p>I can classify and categorize sets</p>	<p>1. 2. 3. 1. 2. 3.</p> <p>I learn concepts presented</p>
<p> </p>	<p> </p>	<p> </p>

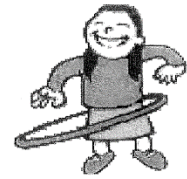
Key: 1 - Can improve more  
2 - Satisfactory

3 - Good  
4 - Very Good

 <p>I take care of my personal needs</p>	 <p>I relax and rest at nap time</p>	 <p>I care for toys and school materials</p>
<p> </p>	<p> </p>	<p> </p>
 <p>I show fine visual-motor coordination</p>	 <p>I show gross motor coordination</p>	 <p>I march and move to music</p>
<p> </p>	<p> </p>	<p> </p>
 <p>I participate in group activities</p>	 <p>I can work independently</p>	 <p>I use the learning center consistently</p>
<p> </p>	<p> </p>	<p> </p>
 <p>I listen and follow directions</p>	 <p>I speak in complete sentences</p>	<p>We went to the zoo yesterday.</p> <p>I use acceptable grammar and pronunciation</p>
<p> </p>	<p> </p>	<p> </p>

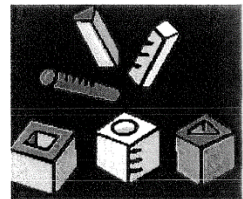
**MOVEMENT**

- I can kick and throw a ball .....
- I can jump .....
- I can run .....
- I have some sense of balance .....
- I am confident on the outdoor equipment .....



**VISUAL PROGRESS**

- I can name common pictures in a book .....
- I enjoy and can build a x10 piece puzzle .....
- I can construct with blocks .....
- I can count to 10 .....



**GRADE 000 ACTIVITIES**

- I can hold a crayon properly .....
- I enjoy painting .....
- I enjoy music .....
- I can go to the toilet by myself .....
- I am eager to participate in the daily activities .....
- I can separate from daddy/mommy in the morning .....
- I help to tidy up the classroom .....



## **APPENDIX 3: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

### **1. Early experiences of becoming literate**

Tell me about yourself – who you are, where you come from, your childhood....

What kinds of literacy experiences did you have in your home? Can you share some insights into how you became literate?

As a child, were you aware of reading or writing before you went to school? e.g.

Can you share some insights into how you became literate?

As a child, were you aware of reading or writing before you went to school? E.g.

were there any printed materials in your home or community?

What was the place of reading and writing in your childhood? (Did reading come into playing games, newspapers, magazines, playing with other children)

Can you tell me what you remember about anything in your life before school that involved literacy?

Was there anyone significant in your life that helped you to learn to become literate?

For example, parent, a brother/sister, teacher, friend, grandparent etc.

What support networks helped you to progress with reading and writing?

Did anyone provide you with books, reading materials, etc.?

Was there story telling in your home? Tell me about that.

Were there any public libraries?

### **2. Constructions of literacy**

What do you understand by the term literacy?

How do you think your early experiences have impacted on your attitudes to and perceptions of literacy now?

Are experiences of learning to become literate happy ones? Please explain.

Do you think that becoming literate happens on its own?

### **3. How children become literate**

Are your own experiences of becoming literate the same or different from those of your learners your own children/children in your family?

Tell me about the learners in your class?

By the time a child leaves your class, what is he/she able to do?

What can a literate learner do? What does a literate learner look like?

What are some of the problems that children at this age might be experiencing?

#### **4. The role of the early childhood teacher in the construction of the literate learner.**

How many years have you been teaching for?

What do you think teaching is all about?

How do you see your role as a literacy teacher?

Describe the kinds of activities you use to help in the development of literacy?

Do you follow a structured programme?

Tell me about your school day?

#### **5. Training and development and teaching experience**

What kind of training have you had as an early childhood teacher?

Has this training helped you to develop the skills to teach literacy to young children?

What do you think is important information that one needs for teaching young children? Did your training provide you with this information?

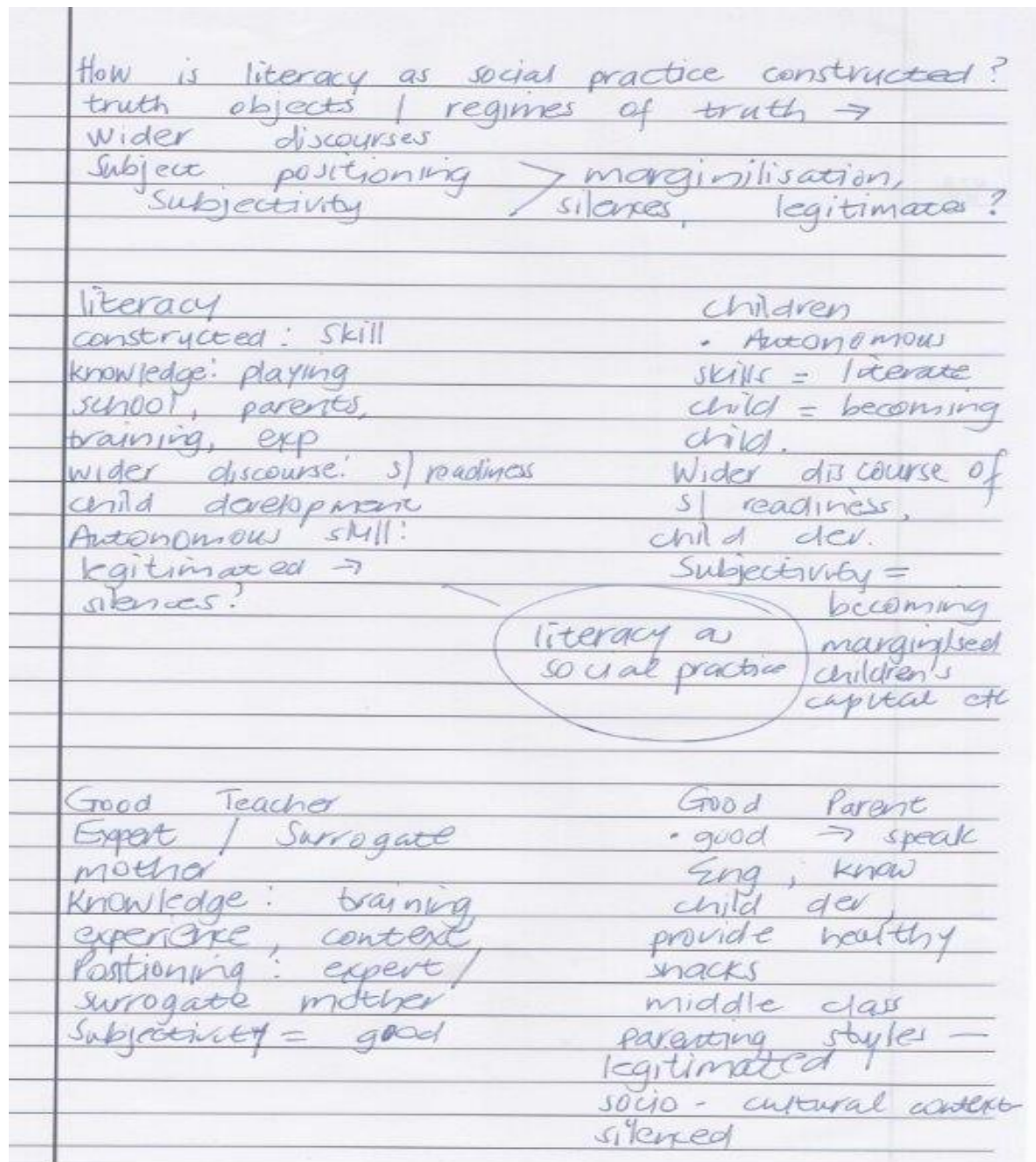
#### **6. Problems experienced in teaching young children**

What problems do you experience in your teaching?

How do you help children who have problems with learning?

Do you get support from the parents of the children in your class?

## Appendix 4: Diagram –teachers discourses



## APPENDIX 5: ETHICAL CLEARANCE LETTER



Faculty of Education  
Ethics Office

Room 13  
Winkie Dewet Building  
Faculty of Education  
University of the Free State  
P.O. Box 339  
Bloemfontein 9000  
South Africa

T: +27(0)51 401 9922  
F: +27(0)51 401 2010

www.ufs.ac.za  
BarclayA@ufs.ac.za

17 November 2011

### ETHICAL CLEARANCE APPLICATION:

*MAKING VISIBLE LITERACY AS SOCIAL PRACTICE IN EARLY CHILDHOOD CENTRES IN THE FREE STATE PROVINCE OF SOUTH AFRICA.*

Dear Ms CD Martin

With reference to your application for ethical clearance with the Faculty of Education, I am pleased to inform you on behalf of the Ethics Board of the faculty that you have been granted ethical clearance for your research.

Your ethical clearance number, to be used in all correspondence, is:

**UFS-EDU-2011-0057**

This ethical clearance number is valid for research conducted from the date of issue. Should you require more time to complete this research, please apply for an extension in writing.

We request that any changes that may take place during the course of your research project be submitted in writing to the ethics office to ensure we are kept up to date with your progress and any ethical implications that may arise. At the conclusion of your research project, please submit a project report stating how the research progressed and confirming any changes to methodology or practice that arose during the project itself. This report should be under 500 words long and should contain only a brief summary focusing primarily on ethical considerations, issues that may have arisen and steps taken to deal with them during the course of the research. Upon receipt of this report, a final ethical clearance certificate will be issued to you, which will form part of your final dissertation.

Thank you for submitting this proposal for ethical clearance and we wish you every success with your research.

Yours sincerely,

Andrew Barclay  
Faculty Ethics Officer

