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# Producing literate subjects? Using the spatial and temporal as lenses to examine early literacy classrooms

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## Abstract

Concerns have been raised about children's levels of literacy in early schooling. Assessments point to a problem but give little insight into practice. This paper locates itself in a Foucaultian paradigm to investigate early literacy practices. It uses Foucault's (1977) dual definition of discipline: a body of knowledge and a means of social control to examine how literacy, (a body of knowledge), is configured in relation to how children are disciplined, (a means of social control) to become literate. Two disciplinary means, the spatial and temporal are applied to five classrooms from Grade 00 to Grade 3 in a Johannesburg preschool and primary school. An analysis of the workings of space and time show the narrowing of spaces and tighter control of time. Read against teachers' limited conceptualisations of literacy these spatial and temporal restrictions raise questions about the literate subjects produced.

## Introduction

On the whole, early literacy in this country is an under-researched area, but what happens in these classrooms is crucial because they form the foundation upon which all other literacies are developed and built on. A number of local and international evaluations (DoE, 2003, 2005; SACMEQ II, 2005; PIRLS, 2007), highlight a disturbing trend that many children have not mastered the basic skills needed to work with the numerous texts they will be faced with as they move through schooling and beyond. Their ability to read and write with proficiency, fluency, and more importantly, understanding, is under-developed.

A far greater knowledge is needed of literacy practices in early literacy classrooms that work to produce particular kinds of 'literate subjects' (Luke, 1992). This article takes the position that literacy instruction (in schools and communities) is not just about teaching children to decode and encode texts, rather it works to constitute children in relation to social and cultural beliefs

about what it means to be literate (Maynak, 2004). As children take on these beliefs and practices a particular literate subject is produced. Greater insight is needed in the ways in which literacy practices are affected by teachers' understanding of literacy and how the literacy training<sup>1</sup> children undergo conforms to these understandings. Programmes like the Department of Education's Foundations for Learning Campaign (DoE, 2008) with its step-by-step literacy lesson plans espouse a particular conceptualisation of literacy that may be in tension with many teachers' understanding of literacy, the value and functions it holds for them, and their ability to impart this conceptualisation in the classroom.

Underpinning this article is an interest in exploring the ways in which children are trained to become literate as a part of becoming schooled subjects. It investigates two Johannesburg schools, Acacia Preschool and Southside Primary.<sup>2</sup> To navigate this exploration the article locates itself in a Foucaultian paradigm. Foucault's (1977) notion of discipline frames the discussion of early literacy classrooms. For Foucault discipline is twofold: it is a body of knowledge, in this case literacy. It is also a means of social control, how children are disciplined/trained to become literate subjects. Different understandings of literacy will be translated into different practices, to produce particular kinds of literate subjects. If writing in the early years is predominantly understood to be a display of neatness, then the training children undergo will be different from a teacher who thinks of writing as a creative act. Literacy is obviously not the only discipline children are subjected to, nor is this training limited to the school domain.

## A Foucaultian perspective: space and time as disciplinary techniques

If children are 'disciplined' to become literate then this assumes the operation of power relations. At the outset it is important to stress that for Foucault, power is positive and productive. It is not solely negative or repressive, although sometimes it can be. This is useful in thinking about the role of the

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I use the word training in a Foucaultian sense i.e ('training in the arts of the self') that includes skills, knowledge and beliefs that are internalised to produce self-regulating subjects and in this case literate subjects.

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All names mentioned in this article are pseudonyms.

school. Schools are by their nature disciplinary institutions that aim to produce subjected and practised bodies that form part of a productive citizenry. The modern citizen requires skills and knowledge that can be used to contribute to the economy and conform to a set of norms that maintain social order that benefits everyone. In South Africa's case the vision of this ideal (literate) citizen is set out in the National Curriculum Statement. It desires "literate, creative. . .critical citizen[s]" able to lead "self-fulfilled lives in a country free of violence, discrimination and prejudice" (DoE, 2002).

Schools are central institutions for training citizens. This training is a result of pedagogical power which is directed onto children's bodies. As adults we still remember teachers' exhortations to sit straight, hold our pens in a certain way, which affect bodily positions. Disciplinary power functions at the level of the body and in doing so it "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, p.39). The internalisation of such processes until they become part of the literate subject's embodied habitus (Bourdieu, 1992) is not a negative, repressive process. As one reviewer of this article rightly points out, literate subjects who can sit still and focus on their reading are desirable. Early skills like learning to hold a pencil, or how to hold and open books, as well as making meaning from print, understanding the conventions of genres and being able to produce and design them are part of the process of constructing and governing a productive, TV-license-paying-income-tax-submitting population.<sup>3</sup>

Foucault (1977) argues that there are four means through which discipline operates: the art of distribution (space), the control of activity (time), organisational genesis and the composition of forces. All four are important and interconnected but due to the constraints around article length I focus on the spatial and the temporal. There are two major reasons for this. The first is that there is a growing recognition in educational circles of the importance of the spatial and the temporal (Leander and Sheehy, 2004). Soja (1996, 2004) argues that Foucault's critique of nineteenth century historicism led to a theoretical rebalancing. Foucault argues that the entrenchment of historical and sociological analysis resulted in the "history-society. . .dialectic enter[ing] the mainstreams of nearly every disciplinary tradition" (Soja 2004, p.xi) and in

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In South Africa this is a greater challenge. The construction of productive and compliant citizens is dependent on disciplinary power functioning. This is not the case in all of our schools and the challenge is to reassert disciplinary power so that sound learning and teaching become normalised.

fact what needs to exist is a trilectic of the spatial-historical-sociological. This article attempts to understand the operation of the spatial in relation to a group of early literacy teachers and learners located in a moment of time in South Africa.

In addition to this May and Thrift (2001), Soja (1996, 2004), and Foucault (1980, 2000) argue that space and time should not be separated. But much of this work is theoretical, or located within other disciplines (e.g. Kenworthy Teather (1999) in critical geography). In his work on disciplinary power Foucault (1977) discusses space and time separately. This article applies the elements operating within spatial distribution and the control of activity as Foucault outlines them to early literacy classrooms. Then it uses movement flows as tentative exploration of the two together.

When outlining the art of distribution as the first technique of disciplinary power, Foucault (2000) states explicitly that the exercise of power in space is fundamental and argues that “discipline proceeds from the distribution of individuals in space” (1977, p.141). This spatial distribution relies on four techniques:

*Enclosure,*

*Partitioning,*

*The rule of functional sites,* and

*Rank.*

Enclosure of space limits inconveniences and disturbances and allows progress to be monitored. For example the schools in the sample are enclosed by barbed wire fences with surveillance cameras. Partitioning works to regulate movement and is more flexible than enclosure. It allocates individuals their own space, and space to individuals; these partitions may be real or ideal. Classrooms in a school are an example of partitioning and children are allocated to grades, teachers, and places to sit within the classroom. The rule of functional sites allows a space to have multiple uses. The teacher’s desk could be a place to work quietly, a place for one-on-one instruction or a place to store books until they are handed out. Ranking is a result of supervision, or surveillance where individuals are distributed and circulated “in a network of relations” (Foucault 1977, p.146). Children are ranked in schools and classrooms according to numerous criteria like age, gender, academic performance, language proficiency, and behaviour. These impact on spatial

distribution: where boys and girls line up, where Foundation Phase classrooms are located, where the academically weak children sit.

The second technique of disciplinary power is the control of activity which is temporal in nature. It comprises five elements:

*The timetable,*  
*The temporal elaboration of the act,*  
*The correlation of the body and the gesture,*  
*Body-object articulation, and*  
*Exhaustive use.*

The *timetable* functions to “establish rhythms, impose particular occupations, regulate the cycles of repetition” (Foucault 1977, p.149). The timetable is the general framework of activity. For example, in the Grade 00 Acacia class perceptual activities are timetabled after morning ring time. The *temporal elaboration of the act* requires that acts are broken into elements, bodies are positioned, given directions, durations and an order of succession resulting in the *correlation of the body and the gesture*. The temporal elaboration of the act requires that Acacia children sit in their groups at allocated tables and complete a task, e.g cutting out pictures and sticking them onto a page. The children need to know how to position their bodies and what gestures are required to complete this task. This correlation of the body and the gesture requires the mastery of body-object articulation. Basically children learn “the relations the body must have with the object that it manipulates” (Foucault 1977, p.153). To cut out a picture, a series of gestures need to be mastered in order to make the blades of the scissors move up and down to cut a piece of paper. The child would need to put their thumb through the top handle of the scissors and two or three fingers through the bottom handle (depending on the size of the scissors) bending them around the handle to hold the scissors. They would then need to move their thumb and fingers, opening the hand slightly to open the blades. The other hand would need to hold the piece of paper being cut, insert it between the blades, and the fingers in the scissors would contract, closing the blades and cutting the paper. The more complex the cutting, the more small movements would need to be made simultaneously with the hand holding the scissors and the hand holding the paper. The *body-object articulation* is crucial for early literacy, these Grade 00s learn to handle pencils, khoki pens, paintbrushes, magazines, paper, glue, and scissors to create their own texts. The final aspect of the control of activity is *exhaustive use*. Mastery cannot be gained without extensive opportunities for practice.

What this article attempts to do is to think about how children are disciplined to become literate in terms of the 'knowledge' and the means through which this is controlled through their training in time and space across early schooling (Grade 00–Grade 3). It considers teachers conceptualisations of literacy as this is directly connected to how they see literacy as a body of knowledge. It then moves on to discuss how space is used across early literacy classrooms, and how time is organised before it considers movement flows. Before this discussion it is necessary to outline the research sites and methodology used for this research.

## Research sites and methodology

Two schools in Johannesburg located in an ex-white working class suburb comprise the research sites that formed part of a larger study investigating the construction of literate subjects in early schooling. The preschool, Acacia, is the feeder school to Southside Primary. The schools draw children from the surrounding suburbs as well as Soweto and Eldorado Park. Many of the children are multilingual although the medium of instruction at both schools is English.

A multiple case study design was utilised with five classrooms constituting the units in which literacy lessons could be studied: a Grade 00 class (4–5 years), a Grade 0 class (5–6 years), two Grade 1 classes (7–8 years) and a Grade 3 (9–10 years) class. Data was collected over an eighteen month period. This was not a longitudinal study in the traditional sense as classes were observed at the beginning or the end of the year to try to understand transitions children make from preschool to primary school. The Grade 00s, and Grade 1s were observed at the beginning of the school year because this is the entry point for 'informal' schooling and 'formal' schooling. The Grade 0s and Grade 3s were observed at the end of the year (the end of 'informal' schooling and the end of the Foundation Phase). The Grade 0s were followed into Grade 1 of the following year though. Individual children were not the prime focus of the study but rather the continuities and ruptures of literacy practices across these years were. The primary means of data collection was participant observation which was recorded through a combination of field notes, spatial maps and video-recordings. Each teacher was interviewed, artefacts produced by the children and relevant policy documents were also collected.

In order to contribute to an understanding of how children are trained to become literate the spatial and temporal are used as lenses to understand patterns and ruptures that exist across these five early years classrooms. Foucault's (1977) three aspects of the timetable (establishment of rhythm, imposition of occupation and regulation of cycles of repetition) were used as guiding principles to establish daily timelines of each classroom. This enabled me to see temporal shifts and continuities across early schooling. Spatial maps of the classrooms were constructed and four key classroom spaces identified. Movement flows were drawn onto the spatial diagrams by considering where children were distributed in space in relation to the daily activities represented on the timelines. This mapping cannot show the nuances of individual movements in classrooms, what it does reveal are broad patterns and changes over time.

Reading data in relation to the spatial and temporal in this way sets up an understanding of what is happening in these classroom environments. This also needs to be read in relation to particular conceptualisations of literacy which is where I now turn.

## Teachers' constructions of literacy

Teachers' understandings of literacy that emerged from the data are predominantly located in a skills based paradigm. Literacy was described by two teachers as "reading, writing and spelling" (Grade 1 and Grade 3 teacher). The fact that spelling is listed as equal to, and not an aspect of reading and writing is pertinent. When asked what she taught for the Literacy learning area another teacher responded by talking about spelling. This preoccupation with spelling is also reflected in the assessment in the Grade 1 and 3 school reports (Table 1). Set alongside different criteria, spelling could be an important part of editing if teachers worked with a process approach to writing. But, grouped with 'sentence construction' and 'presentation' (a euphemism for neat handwriting), it is a product approach to writing that predominates. Children did weekly spelling tests where the tested words were decontextualised, the choice of words determined by a phonics based approach to reading instruction. One of the teachers described writing activities thus:

We use spelling words . . . applicable to the sound and letter they're doing. And then they only use the texts once they've done the entire alphabet and they are applying the knowledge of their writing skills. They either write their news, copy a text, copy writing cards, so that's how they apply it.



**Table 1: Grade 1 and 3 assessment criteria for literacy**

<b>Foundation Phase Reports</b>	<b>Grade 1</b>	<b>Grade 3</b>
<b>Oral</b>	Vocabulary	Vocabulary
<b>Writing</b>	Sentence construction	Sentence construction
	Spelling	Spelling
	Presentation	
<b>Reading</b>	Expression	Expression
	Fluency	Fluency
	Comprehension	Comprehension
		Punctuation

The repeated references to copying has an impact on how children construct sentences. There is no development from the writing of individual sentences to extended texts in Grade 3. This lack of writing beyond sentence level is borne out by the multitude of worksheets the Grade 3s were given and a trend identified by Hendricks (2006) of the paucity of writing in South African primary schools.

Reading is constructed as the ability to read aloud. In keeping with a phonics approach to teach reading, recognition, identification and fluency was key. Teachers felt that a good reader is “a child that identifies the words that are taught to him. . .and can also tell you what’s out of context”. A good reader is also required to have internalised different forms of punctuation, they need to “pause at the full stops. . .and they try with the commas”. These aspects are reflected in the assessment criteria. To read with comprehension requires a reader who can make sense of what has been read. But observations reveal that there was no discussion of the texts with children when they read aloud. Comprehension was thus inferred from fluency and expression. It is possible for early readers to recognise words, read them fluently, but not be actively making meaning from them.

This conceptualisation of literacy as a body of knowledge that is transmitted to children is limited. Little mention was made that reading and writing could be done for pleasure, or that reading and writing can have different purposes. There was no mention of reading books and extended texts in interviews. It was in the preschool classrooms that story time was part of the daily routine



and ‘discussed’ (mostly at the level of recall than interpretation). Neither preschool teacher included story time in her discussion of literacy. There were few writing tasks where primary school children used literacy for personal expression and recount genre of ‘My News’ limited what the children could say. This is in stark contrast though to the preschool classes where children were given opportunities to, in the Grade 00 teacher’s words “experiment on their own” by producing their own texts, or choosing books to read. As a means of social control the spatial and temporal arrangement of these classrooms worked to discipline literate subjects that contrasted to those produced in Grades 1 and 3.

## The control of activity: curriculum time

The timelines in Figures 1 and 2 provide a beginning and end point of early schooling as an overall point of comparison. As timetables they indicate the general framework of activity in these schools. They also indicate a change over time in terms of how school days are organised at the beginning of early ‘informal’ schooling in the Grade 00 class and at the end of the Foundation Phase in Grade 3. The rhythm of the day is regulated by a bell, represented by the horizontal thick black lines, indicating the point at which specific occupations are imposed. They also show the distinction between ‘curriculum time’ which is controlled by teachers and ‘play time’ which is perceived by children as under their control (Jenks, 2001). I find the term ‘play time’ problematic as there are frequent instances in the early years when play time is scheduled in to curriculum time and is teacher controlled. I use the term free play to indicate child-directed play that takes place outside during ‘breaks’.

8:00	BELL: DAY STARTS
	<i>Tidy up time</i> <i>Morning activities:</i> pray, register, lunch book, weather and days of the week, weekly theme/interest table/show and tell, singing, story <i>Toilet time</i> <i>Perceptual activities</i> 9:45 <i>Lunch time</i>
10:30	
	FREE PLAY
11:30	<i>Story time</i> <i>(Sleep)</i>
12:30	END OF SCHOOL DAY

**Figure 1: Grade 00 timeline of routines**

8:00	BELL: DAY STARTS
	Administration during first class task (Literacy or Numeracy)  Additional tasks (Literacy or Numeracy)
10:00	Lunch
	FREE PLAY
10:15	Class task (literacy, numeracy or life skills) (May read aloud to teacher) Additional tasks
11:50	
	FREE PLAY
12:10	Task/ (Play)
1:30	END OF SCHOOL DAY

**Figure 2: Grade 3 timeline of routines**

The most obvious change across the grades is the lengthening of the school day. In Grade 00 of a four and a half hour school day, three and a half hours are teacher directed and one hour is given over to free play. The length of the day is extended by half an hour to five hours in Grade 0 and Grade 1 and to five and a half hours in Grade 3. Free play in Grade 3 is reduced to almost half the time the Grade 00s get, thirty five minutes, and further divided into two segments. Thus curriculum time is broken into three blocks of time in comparison to the two longer blocks of curriculum time in the preschool.

Although only an hour is added onto the school day from preschool to the end of the Foundation Phase, curriculum time unsurprisingly increases by an hour and a half by Grade 3. Play, an important part of preschool activity in which

both socialisation and self-directed learning take place, becomes limited as children are expected to 'work' for longer periods of time.

The timetable as imposer of occupation and repetition is reflected in these timelines but they also reflect the daily occupations or tasks that children are required to perform. A particular notion of the schooled subject is revealed in the timelines. Jenks (2001, p.73) argues,

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.

What is clear from the preschool classrooms is the entrenchment of regular routines. Both the preschool classes learn to eat, sleep, work, excrete, and play at the same time everyday. The Grade 0 teacher is acutely aware how unsettled the children become if she 'breaks the routine'. Although there are routines in the primary school they are less rigid, children do not do the same activities in the same order every day. The fact that both these timetables have large blocks of time rather than being divided into smaller equal segments of time is crucial to the development of early literacy. Knowing what happens everyday, where it happens, and what children must do with their bodies is crucial for mastery. Or, in Foucaultian terms, understanding the temporal elaboration of the act, the correlation between body and gesture and body-object articulation and having the opportunity to practise these daily (exhaustively) leads to mastery. At the beginning of the year learning to write, cut, finish colouring in take longer. Enough time needs to be allocated to mastering reading and writing so that these practices become habitual. There is a change over time as levels of mastery increase so do the number of tasks and their complexity. Teachers spend less time working through all tasks with children and spend shorter periods doing whole class teaching before leaving the children to apply this knowledge to a task.

## The utilisation of classroom spaces

Four classroom spaces have been identified as key sites where literacy practices take place: the teacher's desk, the reading corner, the carpet and children's desks (Dixon, 2004). These spaces can be read as functional sites because each space can be utilised for a number of purposes. This section compares of the utilisation of these spatial configurations across the grades.

Figure 3 shows clearly that the Grade 00 classroom has a different design to the other classrooms. It is the biggest, has five hexagonal tables for groups to work at, a large carpet that is partitioned into a fictional play area opposite the teacher's desk. There is also a cleverly designed reading corner with bookshelves and cushions and an interest table on the other side of the partition, and an open carpet space for children to sit on and play. The Grade 0, 1, and 3 classrooms (figures 4 and 5) all have a carpet fixed underneath the black board at the front of the room. The Grade 0 classroom has a reading corner that is at the back of the classroom where the books are stored in pigeon holes. All the children's desks in Grade 0, 1, and 3 are arranged in groups. Teachers placed their desks either at the back or the front of the class which are prime positions of surveillance.

**Figure 3: Grade00 Spatial Map of Grade00 classroom**

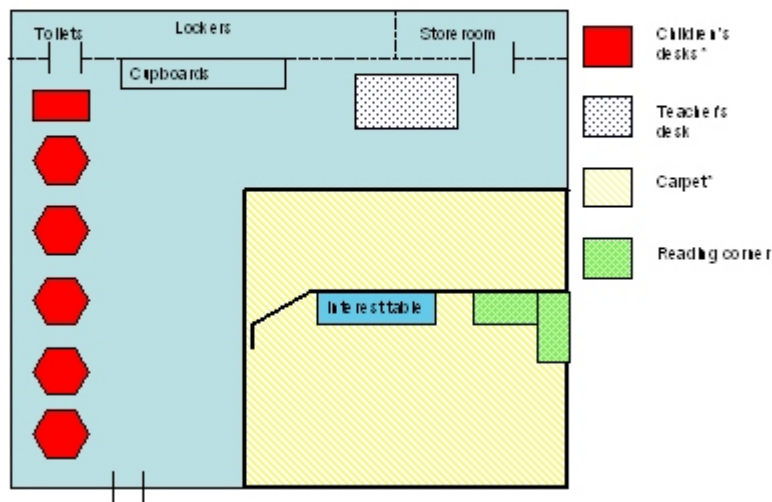


Figure 4: Spatial Map of Grade 0 classroom

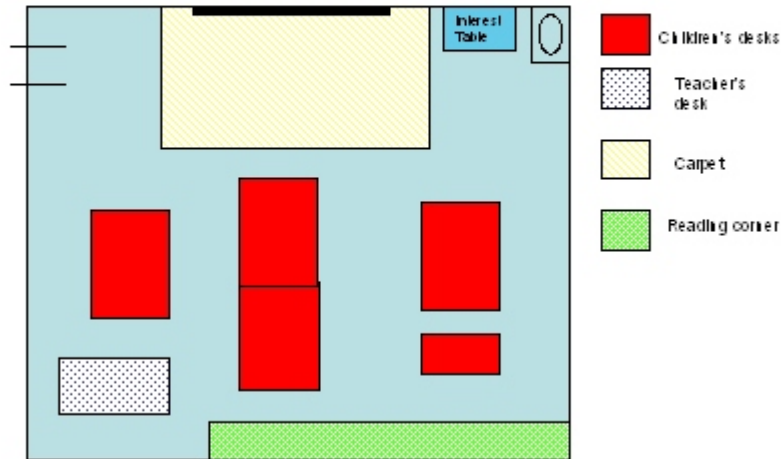
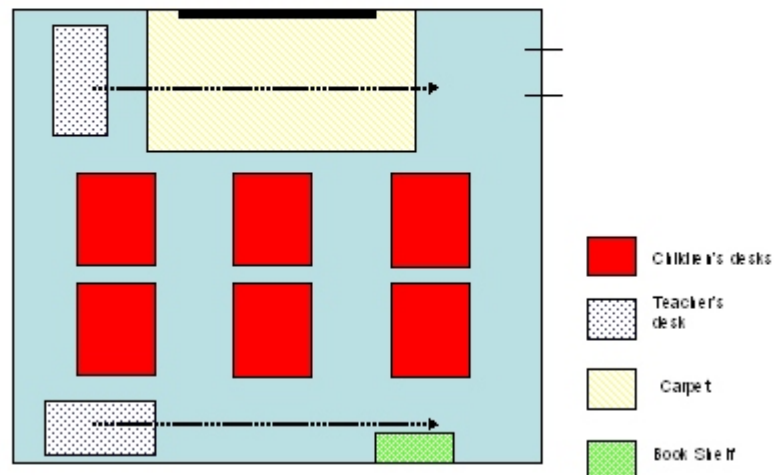


Figure 5: Spatial Map of Grade 1 and 3 classrooms



The teacher's desk was barely utilised at all in Grade 00 because the teacher spent her time with the children who needed constant attention. It was a restricted space for the children. Her movements were fluid and influenced by the daily routines. In Grade 0 the teacher's desk was used for administration and marking of children's work. Behaviour for being in the teacher's space

was prescribed and children were not allowed to crowd the desk but line up. This is an indication of children learning the rules for being in different classroom spaces. The Grade 1 teachers spent more time at their desks often marking and preparing books. Space is now made for children who need individual attention and to read aloud. The Grade 3 teacher spent the most time at her desk and there is a correlation between this time and the time children are confined to their desks. These children are more independent and do not require the same attention as the younger children. The first shutting down of space is evident here as the fluid movement of the Grade 00 teacher diminishes across each year.

The reading corner is a space that is systematically shut down. In Grade 00 as a functional site it is designed for children with shelves that store books with their covers facing the reader, and cushions to sit on. It is utilised when play time is scheduled in the curriculum although it is not as popular as the open carpet as a play space. In this space children begin the process of becoming readers in an exploratory way, learning to handle and hold the books and read images and 'read'/tell stories. They know not to 'hurt the books'. This is a space for a solitary reader or space to read with friends. Observations show that children mimic the reading aloud they have seen modelled by the teacher using common story phrases ('One day the. . .'). The design of the Grade 0 reading corner does not encourage reading. There is no place to sit and read the books at the back of the class and it was infrequently used. Reading is a teacher-controlled group activity on the carpet. In Grade 1 the reading corner is no longer a functional site but a shelf to store readers. The Grade 3 bookshelf had battered books and annuals that were seldom used by children. The development of this space was hampered by an increase in the number of children but the spatial configurations of the reading corner in these classes worked against their proper utilisation.

The carpet is the most functional of all sites. Observational data reveals it is used for sanctioned and unsanctioned play and performance, whole class and small group teaching, story time, reading, playing teacher directed games. It is also used as a place to sleep, a waiting area, a place of surveillance and discipline, and for some children a space to fight. The Grade 00 and Grade 0 day begins and ends on the carpet. It is space where a large amount of literacy learning took place. The Grade 00s have been ranked into groups that reflect ability and are taught to sit in straight rows. The Grade 0s are allocated a space on the edge of the carpet making a 'square' circle. Preschoolers internalised daily routines and behavioural norms – this is evident from an incident when several Grade 0s were absent. Rather than reorganising the circle, the children

remained in their spaces leaving gaps for the absent children. The circle as a means of spatial distribution is an effective means of targeting the body in the exercise of power. Facing inwards means that everyone can see everyone else. The closed nature of the circle works to create a sense of unity. The Grade 0 teacher often went round the circle asking for the identification of a letter, word, or suggestion for a song. The literate subject constructed in this space is one who forms part of a group who learns to work together with others. 'Correct' socialisation was demonstrated by an ability to be with, work together with other children, and follow institutional regulations in these classrooms.

By Grade 1 the carpet is more highly regulated. It is no longer a place to play. The majority of activities consist of whole class reading, group reading, individual reading and story time. The two Grade 1 teachers used the carpet differently. The teacher who used it more implemented a routine for children to get to the carpet 'on tips of toes' and where children sat 'boy girl, boy girl' and shortest to tallest so that everyone fitted into the space and could see her. The management of bodies through space created less chaos. By Grade 3 the carpet was used for children to eat their lunch before the first free play session.

The Grade 00 class stands in stark contrast to all the other grades in relation to the way desks are used. The children sit at their tables in their allocated groups, ranked by ability. But, once they have completed the task at their desk, they are expected to move on to each of the other tables to complete all the other tasks. In a day they may colour in, paint, build puzzles, string beads and build blocks on the carpet. Sometimes these tasks are punctuated by an unsanctioned 'play break'. By the end of the lesson the children have completed all the tasks, in their own time, and worked with a variety of other children. This again works to develop a collective. In the other grades movement becomes increasingly restricted as children are allocated a space to work and are expected to spend greater lengths of time there. Although the desks are configured in groups most of the work is individual. Children are expected to work quietly (or in the words of the Grade 0 teacher "lock your mouths and throw away the key") and independently. The bodily training required to sit at a desk is far more complex than the carpet, and this is where the control of activity cannot be separated from the space it happens in. This is illustrated quite graphically by Parker (2003: no page number):

Sitting at a desk involves a complicated break up of patterns, i.e. flexed ankles, knees and hips with an extended spine and controlled flexion (to look down at your book) and extension (to look up at the board) of the neck. This needs to take place against a



background of unconscious postural stability. In addition to this you need to be able to free your arms from your body in order to perform fine motor tasks such as writing, move your eyes independently of your head and to organise your desk. As if that is not enough, the child is also expected to listen to information, process it and remember it.

This leads me to the final section of this article that considers the amount of movement across and time spent in these classroom spaces across the day.

## Movement flows across time and space in early literacy classrooms

This section considers children's movement across the day. Using the two previous sections it maps children's movement in terms of the spaces they are located in each day in relation to their timetable as well as the time spent in these spaces. These movement flows are intended to present broad patterns of movement across the day as a way of seeing how space and time are used across early schooling. They are not intended to track individual children and cannot reflect movements of children who resist classroom norms. The allocation of time spent in each space is a rough estimate which is used as a general point of comparison. Other researchers have tracked movement flows in individual lessons (Sheehy, 2004) but these are more nuanced detailed analyses with a different focus. These diagrams use arrows to show which spaces the children move to. Arrows with a circle attached indicate the beginning of the school day. Arrows with broken lines indicate play or free time within curriculum time. The numbers next to arrows indicate the order through which children move through space and the related activity is explained in the discussion below.

Figure 6: Movement flows in space and time: Grade 00

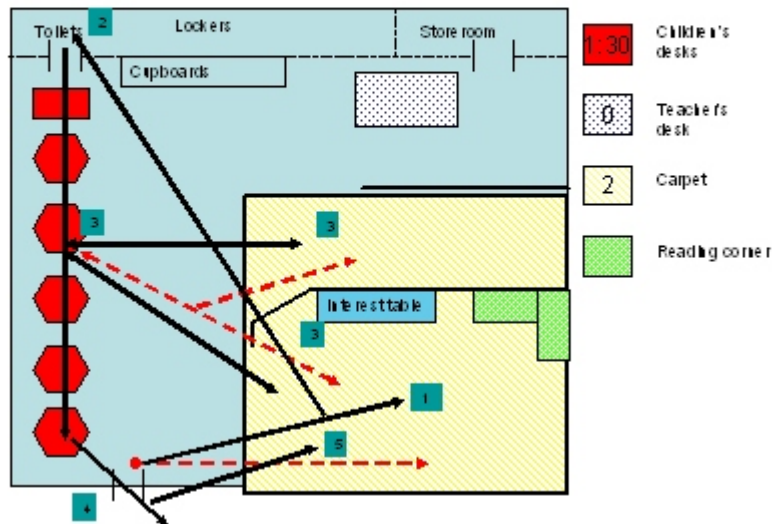
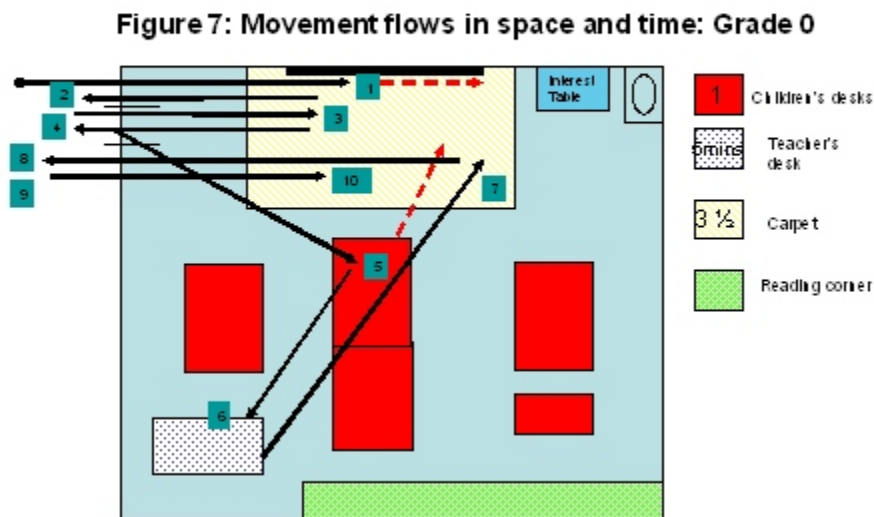


Figure 6 shows the movement flows in the Grade 00 classroom. The three and a half hours of curriculum time are divided between an hour and a half at children's desks and two hours on the carpet. Movement is managed carefully and in the preschool classrooms; it is essential that children conform to routines. Unlike the other grades the Grade 00s often play in the classroom before the school day begins [1], this 'before school time' is predominantly spent on the carpet. When the school day begins, some children may come in from the outside playground, then children are required to tidy up before they sit in allocated groups in rows on the carpet [1]. The morning activities include discussing the weather, counting, singing, a discussion of the weekly theme, the reading of a bible story, and Show and Tell on Friday mornings. If a child brings a book to class then the teacher will read it aloud. The next movement is carefully controlled as groups are sent to the toilet [2] and then move to their tables [3]. Each group is assigned a different task designed to develop and build emergent literacy skills (e.g. painting, drawing, colouring in, puzzle building, cutting out, fantasy play) and each child is required to complete all the tasks over this period of curriculum time. Children are not beholden to the pace of their group in order to move to the next task. Individuals move tables, sometimes guided to new tasks by the teacher. Some of this time may be broken with a spontaneous 'play break' [3] on the carpet before they return to complete a new task. This may be in the reading corner, the fantasy play space or the open carpet. The children then eat lunch and go

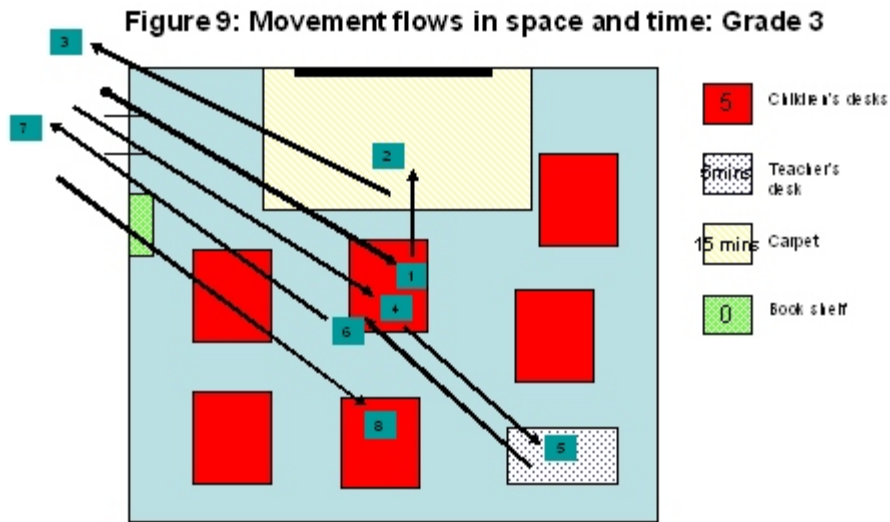
outside to play [4]. On returning from their free play they return to the carpet for story time and sleep there until the end of the school day [5].

The literate subject here has some control over producing and designing texts, is able to work with peers or as an individual. The feedback children get from others at their desks is valuable to literacy learning (Dixon, 2007). The fact that literacy is not a linear process and punctuated with play, both sanctioned and unsanctioned, creates an environment where there is no pressure to complete assigned tasks, but where these are fun. This is an environment where the literate subject is one who experiments. The teacher knows that over time children become more disciplined in completing tasks. These literate subjects learn to self-regulate and move independently from task to task taking responsibility for their learning. But, reading is not taught formally, discussion of texts is limited, and the fact that the reading corner is set up as a space children choose to enter, means that the reading subject may not be developed as fully as they could be.

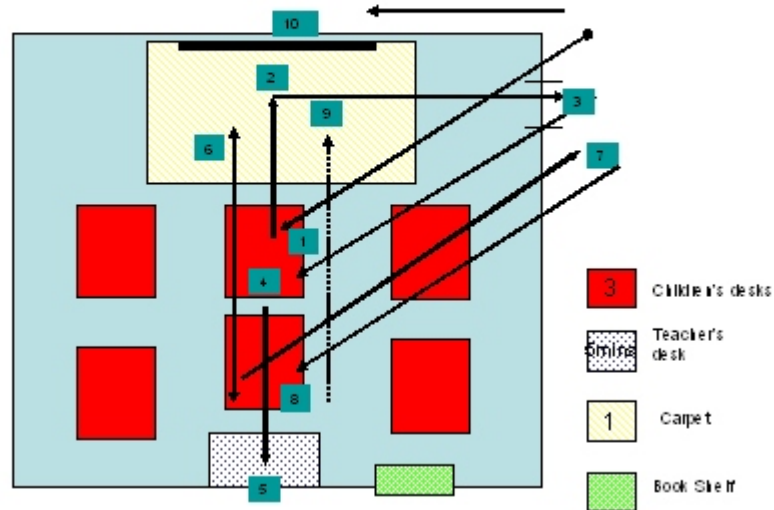


The routines of the Grade 0s are similar to the Grade 00s. But of the four and a half hours of their curriculum time, three and a half are spent on the carpet, one hour at children's desks and children may line up at the teacher's desk to hand work in or have it marked. It is clear from figure 7 that the carpet is at the heart of learning and teaching in this class.

The Grade 0s also begin the day on the carpet and sit waiting until daily administration is done (e.g. collecting lunch money) [1]. They have learnt to play or talk quietly amongst themselves here. Their first ring time includes activities like singing, counting, identifying letters and short words. The reading subject that emerges here is skilled at repetition (chanting numbers, letters), and the identification of decontextualised words, but is not required to make meaning beyond this. The children are accompanied by the teacher to the toilet down the corridor [2]. On their return they eat lunch on the carpet and then leave for their first scheduled free play [3] [4]. After this play break they move to their desks which are arranged in groups [5]. As with the Grade 00s, but with far greater pedagogical control, the correlation of the body and the gesture, an understanding of the body-object articulation and the exhaustive use that come from daily practice are required for the Grade 0s to complete perceptual exercises that are deemed necessary for emergent literacy: “we’ll do perceptual worksheets...drawing lines from the left side to the right side, drawing lines from up to down, doing dot to dot”. The writing subject is being skilled in mastering the spatial arrangement of the page when they will need to form letters and words in Grade 1. This is a predominantly drilled subject rather than a creative one. Although there are times made for free drawing and they are taught in a supportive, caring environment. Once the children finish they may go to the teacher’s table to have work marked [6] and then go to the carpet to wait until everyone is finished. If they are not too noisy then they can play with each other. They engage in a second ring time [7] where they play games (memory games) and after the second free play period [8], end the day on the carpet with story time [10].



**Figure 8: Movement flows in space and time: Grade 1**



The predictable regularity of preschool tasks begins to disappear in the primary school although occupations are still imposed. Tasks are no longer sequenced linearly as several events often take place simultaneously. The primary school subject is one who can complete a greater number of tasks, can interrupt one task for another (leave a numeracy exercise to read aloud to the teacher), and return to complete the original task. The subject is expected to work as an individual rather than part of a collective which is illustrated by the greater time spent at children's desks (figures 8 and 9).

Grade 1s now spend three hours at their desk in a five hour day, and Grade 3s are restricted to theirs for five hours in a five and a half hour day. Both grades may spend a short time at the teacher's desk reading aloud although this is not always a daily practice. Time at the carpet is reduced from three and a half hours in Grade 0 to one hour in Grade 1 and 15 minutes in Grade 3 for children to eat their lunch. The Grade 1s begin the day at their desks [1], eat lunch on the carpet [2], leave for free play [3], return to their desks [4], read at the teacher's desk [5] and possibly go to the carpet as a class or group for a teacher-led reading activity [6]. Reading is regulated by the Letterland phonics programme. The tasks are about recognition, blending letters and the reading subject is an extension of the Grade 0 subject. Children return to their desks, leave for free play [7], come back to their desks [8] and possibly end the day with story time [9]. As the year progressed though, this became less frequent. The only sanctioned times the Grade 3s left their desks was to eat lunch [2], read aloud [5] or leave for free play [3] [7].

The movement flows in the spatial diagrams show the increasingly restricted movement of children across early schooling and indicate the greater amount of time that children are required to sit in one place. A particular conception of the schooled subject emerges. The greater concentration of time spent on the carpet in the preschool grades works to construct a cohesive collective. Children are required to talk, listen, look, sing, move, and read together. As time goes on children are required to sit for longer periods on the confines of a chair and complete work individually. Although all these classrooms' desks are configured into groups very few tasks require group work. Rather than completing a number of tasks like the Grade 00s, the primary school children after receiving whole class instruction complete given tasks. These tasks predominantly develop recall and skills. With Grade 3s spending so much time in their desks, the question that arises as to what they are doing there. What is evident is that when children's literacy training is limited to one space, and the activities are restricted to a skills based model of literacy, then the literate subject that emerges is rather limited.

## Conclusion

While all these teachers' conceptualisations of literacy are deeply influenced by a skills based paradigm, the potential to develop other aspects of literacy is present in the practices of those teachers who utilised more classroom spaces. The use of space reflects the 'space' for experimentation in Grade 00 and a

collective Grade 0 group identity. This is compared to immobile Grade 3s confined to their desks and a phonics influenced reading and writing programme with little space to develop as readers and writers where pleasure, play, and creativity were fostered, or for that matter reading and writing texts with a real purpose.

What is clear is the relationship between space, access to spaces during the day, and discipline. When literacy as a body of knowledge is conceived narrowly and children are subjected to this over a number of years then the ways in which social control is maintained is affected. The Grade 3s who spent so much time at their desks with few opportunities to read and write in ways that engaged their interests, often displayed their frustration and challenged the disciplinary power of the teacher. There were several occasions where the teacher was required to use a whistle to bring the noise level down; where children slipped from their desks to sharpen pencils and ‘borrow’ items at the slightest provocation. This was in contrast to the Grade 1 teacher who through rigorous routines moved children out of their desks to the carpet for different reading activities. The children learnt what was expected of them and far less time was wasted in trying to regain their attention.

It is of course paradoxical that a greater amount of (controlled) movement leads to greater discipline in the classroom and better possibilities for literacy learning. Teachers’ conceptualisations of literacy impact on the spatial and temporal configurations that in turn have an impact on the construction of the literate subject. If these teachers’ understanding of literacy was broadened then it would be interesting to examine the ways in which time and space are reconfigured in their classrooms.

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