Weaving Accounts of Literacy Through the Official Curriculum: Stitching Policy to Practice

Margaret Fletcher, Claire Wyatt-Smith, Brendan Bartlett, & Judith Kearney

School of Cognition, Language and Special Education
&
Centre for Applied Language, Literacy and Communication Studies
Griffith University

Literacy as a construct remains a contested term in Queensland. What is clear however is that the ways literacy is understood and enacted at various levels of our state education system impacts on what constitutes essential literate capabilities as defined in policy and practice. Further, views of literacy shape what counts as literacy success both in curriculum and statewide literacy testing programs. In this paper, accounts of what constitutes literacy are reported as they are revealed in the talk of key members of the education community who are actively involved in the development and implementation of literacy and literacy assessment policy at state and national levels. Their accounts weave together complex discourses of policy, practice and outcomes where literacy is positioned as the thread that stitches teacher knowledge, curriculum implementation and assessment to student learning outcomes.

Introduction

This paper is a research-in-progress report of a project that aims to document and analyse the constructions of literacy that operate across various levels of the Queensland education system. These constructions are grounded in the discourses that reflect the official curriculum as viewed by key members in Queensland education and will frame future research examining how these views intersect with literacy, curriculum and assessment as enacted in school settings. While there is widespread agreement about the centrality of literacy to learning in all curriculum areas, deep contestation surrounds the issue of what we take literacy and quality literacy education in schooling to mean (Wyatt-Smith & Cumming, 2001). This necessarily spills over into the equally contested terrain of how best to assess and report literacy outcomes at local and system levels. Therefore, accounts of how literacy is constituted in the official curriculum by those who are actively involved in the development and implementation of literacy and literacy assessment policy at state and national levels are the focus of this paper.

Over the past decade Australia has had significant policy initiatives that purportedly identify for educators "what to do, how to do it, and for what purposes" when implementing curriculum (Stevens, 2003, p. 662). For example, at the national level,
policy aimed at developing standards for the teaching profession and benchmarking student performance target the "what and how" related to teacher practice for the "purposes of improving student outcomes" (Ingvarson, 2002). Locally, Queensland has adopted a 'Smart State' approach to education with Education Queensland publishing a range of curriculum policies, guidelines and frameworks designed to achieve reform across the school sectors (see Queensland State Education – 2010, (Education Queensland, 1999); Years 1–10 curriculum framework for Education Queensland schools policy and guidelines: A framework for the future, (Education Queensland, 20010), Queensland the Smart State – Education and Training Reforms for the Future, (Education Queensland, 2002a); Destination 2010 – The action plan to implement Queensland State Education 2010, (Education Queensland, 2002b); Literate futures: Report of the literacy review of Queensland state schools, (Education Queensland, 2000).

Schools are responsible for applying these policy initiatives in ways that will address identified issues and develop their own reform agenda. One area of reform is in student literacy performance. In response to this reform imperative, state schools in Queensland have each developed a whole-school literacy strategy that maps approaches to address the literacy needs of students. However, the challenge for educators is to develop a shared understanding of how policy frames literacy and shapes the 'what, how and why' actions of reform in schools. Further, the term, "literacy" remains contested in the literature as theoretical orientations define and determine literacy as a construct.

Seamed accounts in the literature
Currently there are at least three main accounts of literacy duelling for the allegiance of teachers, curriculum and policy writers, and the wider community. Broadly speaking, they can be categorised as: literacy as a cultural resource; literacy as cognitive activity and literacy as tied to cultural difference. Each of these is briefly outlined.

Literacy as a cultural resource
Genre theorists and researchers (Christie, 1991; Martin, 1991) draw on a socially-based theory of language focusing on meaning and how language is structured to convey meaning. They present a view of literacy as a cultural resource that has evolved over time to meet the language needs of particular cultural and social groups.

Literacy as cognitive activity
A behaviourist model of learning adopts a technicist view of literacy that is skills based, dependent on cognitive activity. Here, literacy is a measurable, individual attribute, with literacy education focusing on the teaching of transferable, visible and measurable language knowledge and skills, especially in writing, reading and spelling.

Literacy as cultural difference
Drawing on notions of cultural discontinuity (Au, 1995, p. 90) a third account argues for literacy, or more accurately, literacies, to be likened to other social goods, that is, subject to patterns of distribution and power relationships. Accordingly, differences in literacy practices in general, and in assessed literacy achievement in schooling in particular, are understood as having less to do with individual competence or ability than with what can
be termed structural inequality (Au, 1993) and cultural, socio-economic, and demographic differences (Cairney & Rouge, 1997).

As suggested in the above outlines, differing definitions of literacy suggest multiple views of what constitutes literacy practices and ways these practices should be taught. In the light of current literacy reform agendas in Queensland, views held by those who have contributed to recent policy developments were sought in an effort to map what counts as literacy success and how this might shape curriculum and assessment. Of special interest were both the continuities and discontinuities (Graff, 1986) that emerged from the accounts, and the possible implications of these for how teachers carry forward the reform agenda mentioned earlier.

**Method**

Seven senior informants in statutory authorities who had responsibilities in determining literacy policy development in 2003 were invited to participate. All agreed and were interviewed. Interviews were semi-structured and focussed on eliciting participants' views about literacy and related issues. QSR NUD*IST Ver 4 software (Qualitative Solutions and Research, 1997), was used as a tool for analysing interview transcripts. QSR NUD*IST stands for Non-numerical Unstructured Data Indexing Searching and Theorising. This program facilitates the handling of a large corpus of data through exploring ideas and through building and refining categories. It allows documents to be searched for repeated words and phrases, to create memos about interpretations and understandings, and to generate reports on findings. Categories were indexed using nodes to store coding. This contributed to the credibility of data interpretation by providing an audit trail of the research teams' evolving understanding of the data.

**Phase 1 results**

Results from Phase 1 of the larger three-phase study are reported here. As understandings about how literacy was constructed were developed and refined, a hierarchical Index tree was constructed that showed relationships among meanings in the data. Information stored at nodes was explored further by creating Child nodes which acted as sub-categories of meaning. Index Searches enabled testing interrelationships between groups of categories as part of the iterative cycle of data analysis (Gahan & Hannibal, 1998).

The starting point for analysis was coding all references that participants made to the term, 'literacy'. This category formed the head node and was intensively coded as related constructs intersected, elaborated or constrained ways participants talked about literacy. The following schematic illustrates the detailed complex representations of data reduced to core categories that are elaborated through child nodes.
Figure 1.
Overview of QSR NUD*IST (1997) nodes and core children coded from interview data.
Weaving Accounts of Literacy Through the Official Curriculum

Accounts of literacy as constructed in talk
Participants defined literacy in terms of documented policy and how this intersected with curriculum, assessment, and school initiatives. While literacy was seen as a curriculum issue at the policy level, there was a perception that this was not necessarily enacted in schools. Curriculum was aligned with teachers and was constructed as interplay of policy effects on teacher knowledge that translated into practices. The effectiveness of this interplay was viewed differently among participants. Discussion on student outcomes centered on assessment and a subcategory of mandated testing where issues related to measurement and validity were raised. A shared theme within the talk about testing was its role in effecting change on teacher practice and student performance. An influencing feature of change was professional development and how this was viewed as school-based. Schools were seen as sites of change where leadership influenced the level of impact policy had on teacher practice. While there was minimal reference to students as learners, student performance and outcomes were key constructs. Further, it was within this talk that the issue of diversity emerged as a factor to be addressed by schools in managing the reform agenda.

These topics were woven within and across accounts of what constituted literacy. There were differences in views about the 'what' and 'how' of literacy practice but all accounts highlighted the "purpose"; the policy push in developing whole school literacy strategies as a means of reform. Illustrative extracts from the data are reported to demonstrate the complex and contested views of literacy in the 'official' curriculum.

Literacy, policy, and curriculum
The role of policy in determining what constitutes literacy was represented in all interviews with specific reference to the following influencing documents: Queensland State Education – 2010 (Education Queensland, 1999); Literate Futures (Education Queensland, 2000); Destination 2010 (Education Queensland, 2002); Literacy and Numeracy Strategy for Queensland schools; Year 1-10 Curriculum Framework; QSRLS and syllabus documents. The following illustrative comment identifies some policy documents that underpin recent reform initiatives in Queensland. Here, reform is located within curriculum and literacy issues.

Okay well if we define literacy the way we just have as being broadly informing all areas of the curriculum well then just about every policy EQ has um then curriculum informs literacy so therefore, when I start with the 2010 ah Qld State Education 2010 as the main informing framework um and although it doesn't talk explicitly about literacy in one, in any particular section the views around literacy inform the whole view of what 2010 is about but if we're going to reform the curriculum and address the needs of the kids for now and in the future um that is a literacy issue that needs to be addressed um then down through issues like the Year 1, 10 curriculum framework document. [P04: 159]

Policy documents were seen as interrelated and contributing to reform in a connected way. Participants wove initiatives represented in one document with those represented in others, naming policies that are linked to improving literacy in different ways:

I guess the other key feature of Literate Futures is how it intersects with all the other initiatives in the department particularly the work around what we call the productive
Educating: Weaving Research into Practice

...pedagogies which is very much a focus on teaching, learning and assessment and the core skills of teaching and bringing the learnings from that to the literacy effort. [P01: 20]

(Schools) need to define within that how do they deal with literacy across the curriculum, those Productive pedagogies, Partners for success, Students at risk policy, Ascertaintment policy- all of the major initiatives um of the Department in fact do have significant impact around literacy teaching. [PO4: 161]

Of special interest is how coherence at the policy level between curriculum and literacy provision, assessment, and reporting policy has not been realised to date, despite the proliferation of policy documents exhorting schools to participate in reform agenda. Of high priority in the agenda appeared to be the Literate Futures review (Education Queensland, 2000), identified by all participants as policy that targeted literacy reform in a specific way: "Some of the key components [of Literate Futures] were certainly a requirement for all schools to engage in what we call whole school literacy planning" [P01: 16]. This document was perceived as a way forward in creating a changed approach in the teaching of literacy. However, this view was generally qualified as exemplified in the following comment:

It's a recognition that while there was excellent practice happening in some classrooms, a child could go through years 1 to 7 at the same school and get very disjointed experiences and that the teaching of literacy had become something of the domain of individual teachers. ... Um, it also fairly and squarely makes it clear that literacy is everybody's business not just the Year 1 and 2 teacher. That it is a whole school and not just a primary school ah responsibility, so we put some focus on literacy in upper grades of primary and in the high schools. So every school now has a whole school literacy program. Ah I think it would be fair to say that the quality of those plans will differ. [PO1: 18]

There was a prevailing view that the effectiveness of developing a literacy strategy as a means of reform was uncertain. "So that literacy strategy comes out of the Literate Futures um. Again I'm cynical about words on a page which is why I think the I'm not so sure that those policies do guide the teaching in school?". [P06: 69]

There is more Professional Development available but it's almost more ad hoc, so they have ah more to do with school based programs ...... We need a school literacy plan, you know. Yes you do and you spend a lot of time doing that. We come up with a plan but we don't then translate and now we've got to have changed classroom practice. We just say, "We're right. We've got the plan." [PO3: 251]

Furthermore, leadership and teacher knowledge were linked in accounts of how policy influenced change in literacy teaching. The following view exemplifies this:

What knowledge of these policies do teachers have is what I I think that varies greatly depending upon. There is no doubt that the administration, the leadership in the school from adminstrators from Literacy coordinators influences the work of teachers. You can write all the policies you like but it's the leadership how those are enacted. That counts whether it just sits there on the shelf". [ P02:198]

This linkage was causal where the notion of leadership and reform was framed within the context of the Literate Futures documented policy where whole school plans and professional development were viewed as a responsibility of the Principal. Represented in the data was a view that success in reforming teacher knowledge resided in the work and values of the Principal:
And the underlying support of that really one relies on the Principalship of the school and their ability to set up context where teachers are actually able to professionally develop and learn and the funds that they can access and the ways they can use that to keep that focus. [P03: 193]

What gets (done is) what the Principal value, whether the Principals see themselves as curriculum leaders. [PO6: 87]

The effectiveness of policy in securing change in teachers' practice was contested in the data. This was evident in the following statements:

Schools were required to develop Literacy Plans as they were given very good support and processes to develop them um. Some did well. Some did badly, but the question of whether the teachers actually used those documents in their planning I would say probably none…. They would read them as professional development. They might absorb them but the extent of use I guess. I pushed it". [P03: 93]

But reviews have shown that teachers don't use it (Syllabus) much at all and that they didn't understand a lot of it ah Literacy related policies. [PO2:188]

A view of teachers as conservative and resistant to change underpinned talk related to change as participants accounted for effectiveness of reform initiatives. Further, accounts of why such policy might not be taken up related to the nature of teacher work. Teachers were seen as contributing to their lack of professional learning as observed in the following comments:

Teachers are very conservative profession um because they way in which people do it is not easily amenable to change. People keep doing the way they keep doing teaching, the way they were taught or the way in which patterns they have developed".[PO4:186]

Teachers are extraordinarily good at going to the workshop and doing nothing different either. Now they'll absorb the language. But they won't necessarily change practice. [PO3: 255]

This view of teacher reluctance to change practice was countered with a recognition of the demands made on teachers because of the range and diversity of policy initiatives that need to be addressed:

If you have fewer documents, clearer messages, more coherent messages then and we actually were true to what our priorities are such as Literacy, Numeracy, Assessment then they (teachers) would have a bigger knowledge of it- in my opinion. [PO6: 81].

Um I accept that they're busy but I think that they're busy because they're unable to discriminate with what they should be looking at and what they shouldn't, the sample bags (come) therefore, what knowledge of the policies do teachers have I would say (is) sketchy. Not because it's Literacy but because they've got so much stuff coming into the schools. It's very hard not to come to the conclusion that everything's sketchy. [P02: 12]

A further issue raised was one related to the aging profile of teachers and a need for older teachers to maintain the currency of their knowledge:

And we don't have any systematic way of insuring that the teachers in front of classrooms actually have current systematic knowledge about their craft. We just assume they have; hope that they have, but we don't know that they might be doing what they've done all along. They could be really doing, do you know what I mean, the practices that they started teaching with. [PO3: 209]
Participants viewed the term, "literacy", as problematic. They described how competing views of what constitutes literacy in the education community reflects different teacher knowledge and this contributes to a range of teacher practices that may or may not be effective.

And I would say that the issues are about the biggest issues is that under professional knowledge of teachers and Principals, that we don't need to pick up every phonics program that there is around and think that that is the answer [PO2:88]

And whilst some people might view that English is the literacy syllabus there are aspects of literacy embedded right across the other 6 syllabuses that are already in place, um I guess there's an issue here about the articulation of understanding of what constitutes literacy. Ah you've got 10 multi-literate which has gathered momentum in the last few years um. Literacy itself is can be used with a range of meanings ah and I think that would probably be bolstered by knowledge that it changes ah. There needs to be some basic principle underpinning what we believe to be what is literacy. [PO5: 20]

While literacy was recognised as more than reading and writing print based texts, how this expanded view was accommodated in schools remained a concern:

There's a broader understanding in Curriculum terms of types of Literacy that we now do freely talk about Computer Literacy, Media Literacy so the notion of what Literacy is in Curriculum terms has broadened so there's a far better understanding but in public terms it's still reading and writing. [PO3: 153]

The outcomes for the whole school literacy strategy is to address outcomes around the broader multi-literacy view as well as a basic literacy view. Now that presents us as a system with major problems because we don't have any measures. All we measure is um the basic print literacies in all of our tests and that presents us with a problem because the cynics have always said if you don't measure it um you don't do it um and so why worry about it which is our program management view of the world, that you must be able to measure everything you want to focus on [PO4: 208]

Further, who was responsible for the teaching of literacy was described as problematic. While the official position was represented in the following comment – it was generally agreed this view was not enacted in schools:

Literacy is not seen as the domain solely of those subjects with key learning areas. The [Literacy] position paper states all teachers should be prepared to teach literacy in all learning areas of the curriculum and give examples of literacy practices for all 8 key learning areas in addition with common curriculum elements which are the 49 common curriculum elements which are embedded across the senior syllabuses in 11 and 12. [PO5: 32]

Participants recognised that generally speaking, in practice (as distinct from policy) literacy teaching was located with the lower primary teacher or the English secondary teacher. This was related to views about how it should be taught. A common perception was one that literacy teaching was not seen as a cross-curriculum responsibility in the education community.

There are very few Secondary sites that across the board give any systematic attention to the literate practices of their students. I think that has only like skimmed the surface and most of those teachers would believe that Literacy is somehow what the English teacher does. [PO3:143]
Um well part of it also is I think the invisibility issues of literacy um that is a problem in secondary subject area classrooms but also a problem in upper primary classroom. Literacy is conceived of as something that is beginning literacy, doing A,B,Cs, doing phonics. [PO4: 145]

Our message in Education Qld is that all teachers are teachers of Literacy. Ah but ah embedding that notion for Science Teachers, for History Teachers is quite difficult. [PO7: 91]

Freebody and Luke's reader roles (Literate Futures, 2000) were viewed as influencing the how of teaching literacy and this linked to previous discussion about Multiliteracies. Well they should be drawing on their Syllabus. They should be using a school curriculum plan. They should be using on the whole school literacy strategy, should be using the frameworks around the four resource model that's in Literate Future's reading um in order to frame their particular program. [PO4: 200]

They'd know about that, the Four Roles of The Reader as we used to call it. When it first came out it was ah certainly ah influential and a lot of ah schools seem to think it widened teacher practice from just decoding and comprehension. [PO2: 186]

Emerging from this segment is how acts of weaving are central to teaching, and more specifically, preparing for teaching. It is the teacher's role, so it seems, to weave syllabus materials, the school curriculum plan, the whole school literacy strategy, and what are referred to as 'frameworks around the four resource model'. Interestingly, however, no mention is made of how these documents of themselves are related first and foremost to either literacy or to curriculum and therefore, the bringing together of literacy and curriculum becomes delegated for teachers to accomplish. Additionally, literacy was constructed around policy in ways that connected what literacy meant in the educational community, who was responsible for teaching it, and how it should be taught to the effectiveness of professional development in reforming teacher practice.

A further dimension of literacy was constructed within and as a result of assessment policy where the relationship between assessment for learning and assessment for measurement emerged as an area of contestation. The former view dominated the talk that centered on accountability issues and validity.

**Literacy, policy, and assessment**

In the previous decade in Queensland, assessment including testing has traditionally been school-based where teachers construct their own testing procedures for reporting purposes (Young & Fletcher, 2000). The Year 2 Diagnostic Net was trialed in 1995 and became the first mandated assessment to be used across Queensland schools. Its purposes are to:

- monitor and report on aspects of children's literacy and numeracy development during the early years of schooling in Queensland
- identify those children who are experiencing difficulties in literacy and numeracy and provide diagnostic information to the school authorities who support these children. [Source: Queensland Studies Authority at http://www.qsa.qld.edu.au/yrs1to10/y2net/overview.html]

In 2003, census testing in aspects of literacy and numeracy for Years 3, 5 and 7 were introduced across Queensland to:
• collect data from the population of Years 3, 5 and 7 students for reporting to parents/carers and schools and for systemic reporting
• accommodate the assessment of students against national benchmark standards. [See Queensland Studies Authority http://www.qsa.qld.edu.au/testing/357tests/overview.html]

While there is some evidence that Year 2 teachers have adapted their practices with the introduction of the Year 2 Diagnostic test (Fletcher & Young, 1999), little is known about how teachers actually use reported results of census tests to provide interventions designed to improve outcomes (Wyatt-Smith, 2003). In the interviews however, the relationship among policy, literacy and teacher practices was highlighted, drawing attention to how assessment was expected to shape curriculum and teaching. Specifically, the power of assessment in defining what literacy is and how it is valued in itself and in relation to curriculum was an issue for participants. In the following accounts, assessment (in the form of census tests) was viewed as defining literacy in terms of what can be measured.

So I'm taking the definition of Literacy at the moment to what it is the Literacy test says. I would dispute it's being a definition um why um I guess it's a um a (sop) to the standards movement. I don't think it's anything to do with Literacy really, think it's a (sop) to something we can measure and as politicians we can report on over time. [PO6: 45]

And now I guess we're moving to ah reluctantly for many and certainly there are Benchmarks and so on have (take/taken) that off into what we'll see as a requirement for ah a very different ah set of definitions around Literacy. Ah at the moment it's very text based ah with standard form () as text. [PO7: 67]

Emerging from these views is the notion of literacy tests as a "sop" to the standards movement, as though the tests were in the best interests of the movement (as distinct from those of teachers and students). Also clear is the reported dislocation between a rich account of literate capabilities and the information generated through testing — I don't think it's anything to do with Literacy really [PO6: 45]. Perhaps most concerning in the above disclosure is that how a key policy spokesperson self-reports subservience to both the standards movement and the literacy test as though both were governing influences over how s/he moved policy forward. In short, all power is seemingly allocated to a movement (the standards movement) and to the regulatory influence of testing, with the speaker rendered powerless to intervene in redirecting the trajectory of assessment policy.

Throughout the interviews, the usefulness of mandated testing was framed within an accountability perspective as exemplified in the following account, "Even though there is still a lot of debate about the merits of the test, it never the less sends a signal that this is something we're going to keep an eye on" [PO1: 22] Elaborating on assessment within a political perspective PO1 related accountability at government and school levels as follows:

It's used to report against the 'Destination 20 10' targets. Year 3, 5, 7 data is recorded annually to the parliament and it is also reported the commonwealth who report it federally. The other way the data is used is that it is provided to executive directors about schools in their area and schools that are consistently underperforming and where performance is declining. It is then used as a performance management tool. Principals are given the data and said right what's happening and why is this happening? And there'll be all sorts of
reasons. Similarly if schools are doing exceptionally well and clearly have found some magic ingredient, that is something the system will go and have a look at through the district director about what's happening and ah, you know then that would attempt to make an effort to promote that to other schools. So it's very much used as an indication of the performance of a school. [PO1: 69]

In this segment, the speaker links the discourses of accounting for performance and accountability, and educational/school quality with performance data. The priority is for schools to find "some magic ingredient", and in this way to be rewarded by being publicly promoted. The corollary of this is where schools fail to find the ingredient – where they are underperforming or where performance is declining – some centrally instigated investigation is routinely expected to occur. The push for constant school monitoring is thus represented as necessary, to avoid a situation where under performing (referred to in the UK as 'sink' schools) go undetected.

Assessment and accountability were interrelated themes as participants reflected on ways that testing validated, and in some cases, challenged teacher practices:

I guess there's been an interrogation of curriculum in ways that ah that haven't always been the case for teachers. I think there's a greater pressure on teachers ah and schools to be able to do ah more substantial, to demonstrate responsibility for and to be able to articulate more ah substantive claims about what it is they're doing. [PO7: 219]

And it's wonderful to see how good testing ah shows the teacher that they're not teaching particular aspects of Literacy like viewing. [PO2: 148]

Participants interviewed in this project perceived assessment policy as an influencing factor in shaping teacher knowledge about student performance which in turn shaped curriculum and teacher practice as illustrated here:

The Year two material is has been and is being used extraordinarily well …to document and plan not only document student performance but to assess and plan and in fact that appropriate Curriculum Cycle. So the schools that use it well then question when they look at how the student is doing whether their resources are appropriate, whether their pedagogies are appropriate, whether their you know, their methods. [PO3: 165]

However, this view was qualified when referring to the census testing:

The teachers don't engage with them they may look at the results and essentially if the results don't match their view of the students they quite rightly tend to dismiss the results. So I don't think the Three, Five and Seven tests have fundamentally changed teacher practice at all. It's changed some school practices because schools now collate or look at and analyse the data. [PO3: 125]

The attitude of teachers towards the tests that they're regarded as some sort of obscure thing that doesn't relate to what goes on the classroom um the teachers get the results they poo poo it they say it's got nothing to do with me it's got nothing to do with my program there's no relationship to my program then I won't take any notice of it. [PO4: 252]

**Literacy assessment and authority relations**

Throughout the interviews literacy assessment was construed as a key means of establishing and maintaining authority relations in the education system. There were frequent references to accountability, performance, and meeting targets (or not), pointing to an educational assessment context where stakeholders included key personnel well
beyond the confines of the school and the classroom.

For Ministerial Portfolio Statement goes with the budget so the Minister can gain the funds for Education for the following year. We are judged in terms of um whether we have met our targets or not and targets are supposed to be met and performances supposed to rise.

[PO4: 244]

Here, the speaker makes clear that school performance is about providing data that, in turn, reflects on the quality of school administration, right through to the level of the Minister. For example, there is reference here to 'we are judged', as though the downward pressure on schools to demonstrate quality, reverberates back up through the chain of education command to enable other judgments of performance. The connection between educational performance, accountability, and political survival was clear throughout the interviews, extending to mention of how terms of office can be affected by perceived poor performance in schooling.

Against this backdrop, a school's Literacy Strategy was regarded as a publicly available document that served not only to record a school's goals for literacy provision and improvement, but also worked as a mechanism for measuring school effectiveness. The extent to which the schools' published strategies actually work to impact performance and improve students' literacy outcomes is not yet known. The potential of these documents lies in how they are used locally to inform teachers' critical reflections on practice. In the absence of such reflection, and system support for teachers' judgments and moderation practices, such potential is not likely to be realised.

Conclusions

These illustrative accounts weave together complex discourses of policy, practice, and outcomes where literacy is positioned as the thread that teachers are required to use to stitch teacher knowledge, curriculum implementation and assessment to student learning outcomes. Throughout the interview data, take up of policy is reported within themes of leadership, teacher work and testing, including testing for political survival. Disconcertingly, this view locates agency in policy as being beyond the responsibility of the speakers. Further, the 'what to do, how to do it, and for what purposes' of policy reform (Stevens, 2003, p. 662) are located within schools where the effectiveness of the doing is measured in testing results. The speculation as to the specificity of enacted policy in schools that is evident in the data reported in this paper will be the focus of Phase 2 of this research. During this phase, accounts of what constitutes literacy from the perspective of teachers and how these views are enacted in classroom settings will provide practitioner perspectives on the nexus between policy, practice and literacy outcomes.

References


Qualitative Solutions and Research. (1997). *QSR NUD*IST Ver 4 [Software].


