Bringing literacy
home

Family literacy
Conference Proceedings

19 – 21 September 2005
Pietermaritzburg

Produced by The Centre for Adult Education

**UNIVERSITY OF
KWAZULU-NATAL**

Conference Proceedings
Bringing Literacy Home

Conference held by the Centre for Adult Education at the
University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg

19 – 21 September 2005

Proceedings compiled and edited by Sandra Land

Bringing literacy home: **Family literacy Conference Proceedings**
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Welcome to the conference

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Centre for Adult Education, University of KwaZulu-Natal

The Conference was organised by the Centre for Adult Education of the University of KwaZulu-Natal. The Centre, which has existed in various forms since 1971 at this University, is now part of the new School of Adult and Higher Education, the largest university based grouping of adult educators in South Africa today.

The Conference comes at an important time of reflection and indeed doubt about progress in literacy in both South Africa and in Africa as a whole. Many are now beginning to doubt that the grandiose Education for All and Millennium Development Goals can be achieved. Indeed in several countries there have been declines in what was achieved through immediate post-independence national literacy campaigns. The Tanzanian and Mozambique campaigns are examples here. Even countries where the percentage of illiterates has been reduced, raw numbers have increased (as in South Africa).

South Africa, of course, never had a post-democratisation, national literacy campaign, but skipped that stage and went for an exceedingly formal Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET) system of which the new Minister of Education, Naledi Pandor recently said that it had become "utilitarian and narrow" and had "sought to make adults like children" – "we are teaching schooling!" ABET would need to be re-conceptualised. There was a need for a mass literacy programme. She believed that it might be possible to get youth involved as educators in such a campaign.

Now is family literacy the new way to go? We have been through all the various literacy models and panaceas – radical Freirian literacy (recently regenerated by REFLECT), functional literacy, literacy and livelihoods, etc. And then there are of course the New Literacy Studies people who discovered that there were multiple literacies, so much so that the common sense meaning of literacy vaporised.

And now family literacy. What is it?

I recently read a book about Charles Wesley, the founder of the Methodist Societies that led to the creation of the Methodist Church. Mrs Wesley, at an appropriate stage, alphabetised all her children using the Bible as text. She was a bit disturbed that it took a full day to alphabetise her youngest child who was clearly a bit slow. Is that family literacy? So what is it?

Any definition of family literacy is likely to be a contentious issue. However, one that most people would probably agree with is the activities that happen within people's homes and families that involve reading and writing. Some of these activities are instrumental (writing down a phone number, a recipe, or reading instructions on how to turn on your new piece of equipment), and some are for enlightenment or enjoyment – Scrabble, the Bible, a teach-yourself book or a trashy novel.

Each family has its own unique family literacy patterns, and in some families, literacy skills are taken for granted and used much more casually than in other families. Looked at superficially from the outside, people in families with the most highly developed literacy skills take them the least seriously, and use them in the most casual ways. But that is because they have been thoroughly naturalised. People who curl up in a chair with a cup of coffee and a novel, scribble casual notes to one another and don't object if their children want to play with their pens and paper (or computers) are likely to have a tertiary education, an extensive collection of books and very high literacy skills. Conversely, people in families with very limited literacy skills, especially those whose personal level of literacy skills is low, tend to take them the most seriously. They are likely to regard reading as a formal activity which they undertake sitting up straight at a table, write only formal, labouriously written letters to one another, and would be horrified if the children got hold of their pens and papers.

Not surprisingly, children who come from households in which literacy skills are used casually and playfully, and who are expected to read and join in with this play as soon as they can pretend to read and write, end up with the most highly developed literacy skills. Children whose parents read them stories have a significant advantage over those whose parents do not, and the quality and frequency of family reading and writing activities is a dependable predictor of children's future academic performance.

But what is most remarkable about family reading and writing practices is that most are invisible to outsiders. The reason for this invisibility is not that people who engage in literacy practices do so secretly or want to prevent others discovering them or adopting them. On the contrary, people who love reading to their children usually urge everyone else they know to do likewise. The reason for the invisibility is that people tend to read (to themselves or with their children), or play games relying on literacy skills in the house when there are no visitors. As a result, the practices remain invisible and mysterious to outsiders.

There is a current fashion for talking about educational communities of practice – which as the phrase suggests, says that the way groups of educators relate to each other and their learners is crucial for effective education – learners join a community. Corrective as this is to the prescriptiveness and banality of much so-called outcomes-based education, recent criticisms of this trend have argued that whilst this "community of practice" element is indeed vital in good educational processes, turning it into some kind of technology may well be self-defeating.

We hope that this conference will allow us insight into the secret invisible world of family literacy practices, will allow us to examine the communities of practice of the educators here who are engaged in family literacy projects, but will also recognise that this is a living movement, to be handled with care and love.

Keeping it in the family: exploring relations between family literacy, early childhood development and adult basic education

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Abstract

Early Childhood Education (ECD) and Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET) have long been regarded as the step-sisters of the South African education system. Both are marginal enterprises compared with mainstream schooling in terms of financial resources, policy development, publicity and prestige. However, both ECD and ABET are arguably crucial to development in the related spheres of personal, community and national life. Family literacy provides a framework for exploring the links between ECD and ABET. This paper outlines various models for linking ECD and ABET within a family literacy framework, drawing on southern African and international examples. It argues that the formal separation of ECD and ABET in different sites of delivery and curricula sometimes undermines the potential for learning for and within the family, and that family literacy approaches have much to offer in enhancing the literacy of both adults and children.

Introduction

The main purpose of this paper is to provide a broad overview of the field of family literacy in order to frame discussion and debate. The organizers of the conference felt it necessary to commission such a paper because of the fact that there are so many different conceptions of the meaning of the term, family literacy and of the multiple ways in which practical engagement can be interpreted and implemented. This attempt at providing a broad overview and framework is by no means definitive.

Another purpose of this paper is that Early Childhood Education (ECD) and Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET) have long been regarded as the step-sisters of the South African education system. Both are marginal enterprises compared with mainstream schooling in terms of financial resources, policy development, publicity and prestige. However, both ECD and ABET are arguably crucial to development in the related spheres of personal, community and national life. Family literacy provides a framework for exploring the links between ECD and ABET. This paper outlines various models for linking ECD and ABET within a family literacy framework, drawing on southern African and international examples. It argues that the formal separation of ECD and ABET in different sites of delivery and curricula undermines the potential for learning for and within the family, and that family literacy approaches have much to offer in enhancing the literacy of both adults and children.

Background to Family Literacy

Family literacy as a concept has been at the forefront of educational and development agendas since the 1960's. It arose primarily out of research which examined factors in the home that contributed to children's success and failure in school (Gadsden 1994). The incontrovertible and disturbing finding (which remains to this day) was that what happened at home in relation to reading had a dramatic and permanent effect on school performance. Its raison d'etre as a field of practice was therefore primarily motivated by concerns about schooling.

Definitions of Family Literacy

The most definitive statement which can be made about family literacy is that there is no definitive definition. It is a very broad concept which is difficult to define precisely because it depends on the context in which it is used.

There appear to be two significant ways in which the concept of family literacy is used and understood:
- ❑ literacy practices within families

- ❑ programmes which are designed to enhance the literacy skills of more than one family member

(Caspe 2003).

One of the most common conceptions of family literacy is in relation to literacy practices within families and the study of these literacy practices. "Family literacy encompasses the ways parents, children and extended family members use literacy at home and in their community" (Morrow 1995, p. 7). The emphasis here is on what families "do" with literacy in their homes and communities.

The other common conception of family literacy is in reference to programmes that work with literacy development of children and adults in various contexts. Common features of family literacy programmes are:
- ❑ they work with adults and children (or on the interactions which they will have)
- ❑ the family unit is the primary focus of the effort
- ❑ they bring home and school closer together (either through bringing the school into the home or bringing the home into the school).

Very often family literacy is an umbrella concept for work on:
- ❑ parent-child literacy interactions
- ❑ emergent literacy in children
- ❑ family support (development of parents and other caregivers)
- ❑ intergenerational literacy activities involving adults and children.

Goals of Family Literacy Programmes

Family literacy programmes encompass a wide range of activities which aim to:

- promote reading in the family
- enhance the ability of parents to support their children's language and literacy development
- address parents' child-rearing concerns,
- model and support developmentally appropriate learning opportunities for children
- allow parents to pursue their own educational goals
- use literacy activities to address family and community concerns
- encourage and support positive learning partnerships among families, communities, and schools.

Relationships between Family Literacy, Adult Literacy and ECD

In an attempt to understand how family literacy relates to adult literacy programmes and ECD programmes we attempted to draw a diagram which shows the intersections of adult literacy, ECD and family literacy. The place where they intersect is the family itself. The diagram also shows the major emphases of work in each sector (the arrows going outwards and inwards). The major focus of Adult literacy work is often in relation to adults' use of literacy in relation to further studies, work or community development. Similarly ECD is often aimed at what young children will need to do at school – how literacy will be used at school. Family literacy programmes, on the other hand, focus on what happens within the family – very often at home, but also in the wider community.

Intersecting literacies of adults and children
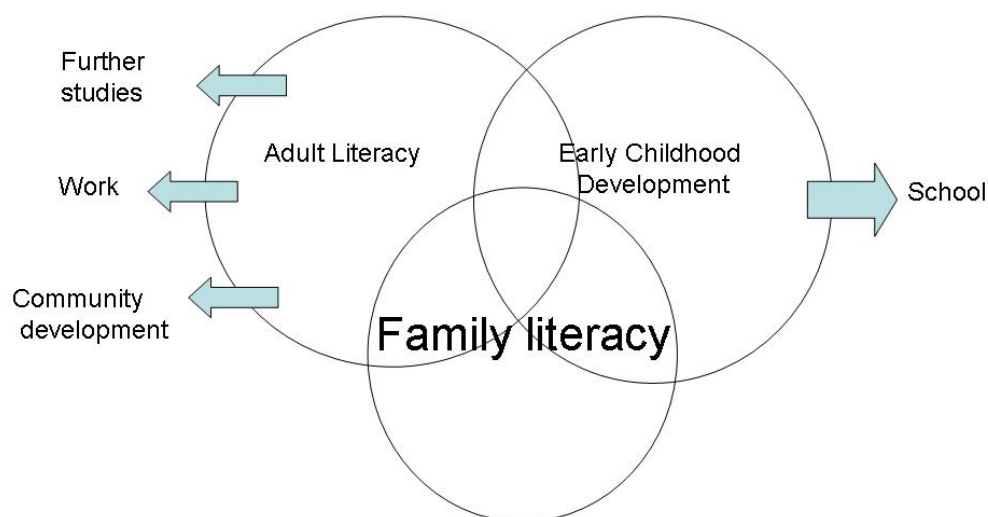
Examples of Family Literacy Programmes

A few examples of family literacy programmes illustrate the range of activities which fall under the term family literacy and form the practical basis for a discussion of different models of family literacy.

The Family Literacy Project (KZN)
The focus of work of this project is on adult literacy learners in their role as parents. The major site of work is adult literacy classes and a significant theme is to encourage parents to do reading and developmental activities with their children. There are a number of supplementary activities to support this work such as the development of libraries (Desmond 2004).

Family Literacy Project (UNISA)
The focus of the work of this project is on ECD sites where caregivers and ECD educators are trained together to read to children at home and in pre-schools. A library is set up at the ECD site and children take books home for their caregivers to read to them (Machet and Pretorius 2003).

Family Literacy (Basic Skills Unit UK)
The site of this work is in schools. Parents and children are taught in parallel and sometimes brought together for joint activities which involve parents reading to children and vice versa (United Kingdom Department of Education and Skills 2002).

"Reading is Fundamental" Project, USA
In the "Reading is Fundamental" Project in the USA, the focus is on the promotion of reading. In this programme young teenage parents are taught about reading and language development so that they can begin to break the cycle of disadvantage by reading to their children.

Models of Family Literacy

There are different ways of conceptualising models of family literacy programmes. Most common amongst these are those which categorise family literacy programmes according to:
- ❑ target group
- ❑ goals and activities
- ❑ sites

Target group

These models are distinguished by the degree to which they directly involve adults and children (Kerka 1991):

- ❑ **direct adult: direct child**
  In this model there are structured programmes which provide formal literacy instruction to adults and children. They usually involve a high degree of adult-child interaction. The UK Family Literacy programme referred to above would fall into this model.

- **direct adult: indirect child**
  This model involves direct educational provision to adults. A strong focus of the programmes is on activities that involve their children's literacy development. The UKZN Family Literacy Project is an example of this model.

- **indirect adult: direct child**
  In this model there is direct educational provision to children. Parents attend workshops connected with the child's schoolwork or the child's general literacy development. The UNISA-based, Family Literacy Project is an example of this model.

- **indirect adult: indirect child**
  In this model the focus is on informal activities rather than formal programmes. Adults and children interact and share in literacy activities together (eg library storytelling day)

Typical target groups (not mutually exclusive) are:
- educationally disadvantaged adults
- newly literate adults
- adult literacy learners
- teenage parents
- mothers in prison
- children of all of the above

Sites

Models can also be classified in terms of the sites from which they operate. These sites are as varied as their target groups but very often relate to the target groups. Some examples are:

ECD sites
- Pre-schools, creches and day-care centres

Young adult sites
- Schools
- Welfare centres

Adult literacy sites
- Community halls
- Churches
- Government department premises

Goals

When family literacy programmes are examined according to goals it is helpful to see them as being placed on a continuum rather than in polarised categories. These goals range from Compensatory (in which the emphasis is on making up for deficits and

disadvantages) to Competence (in which the emphasis is on developing strengths which people already have, working from what they already do etc)

Compensatory …………………..Competence

In real terms, the activities of programmes which may appear to be located at extreme ends of the continuum in terms of their goals are often more similar than dissimilar.

1. Goal: School achievement

In these programmes the major and overt goal is to improve the school achievement of children by promoting parental involvement in children's schooling. These types of programmes are often seen as Compensatory.

Activities in these types of programmes encourage or teach parents to:
  ❑ provide a home environment that supports children's learning needs
  ❑ volunteer in schools as aides
  ❑ monitor children's school progress and communicate with school personnel
  ❑ tutor children at home to reinforce work done at school

2. Goal: Reading improvement

With these types of programmes the focus is on general improvement in relation to skills, attitudes, values and behaviours linked to reading. These types of programmes are also often seen as Compensatory.

Activities encourage or teach parents to:
  ❑ imitate behaviours that occur in the homes of successful readers.
  ❑ get children to read aloud to parents (where parents have limited literacy or dominant language skills
  ❑ foster love of literature through a variety of activities such as storytelling
  ❑ provide print materials

3. Goal: Broader empowerment

Programmes which focus on broader empowerment goals concentrate on increasing the social significance of literacy in family life by incorporating community cultural forms and social issues into the content of literacy activities. They are generally seen as Competence-based.

Activities
  ❑ focus on the role of home language and culture
  ❑ address family and community concerns
  ❑ incorporate these into the curriculum
  ❑ enable adults to develop critical understanding of schooling
  ❑ focus on functions, uses and purposes of literacy within families.

(Weinstein-Shr 1990

Critical perspectives

One of the major critiques of family literacy programmes is that they are based on a "deficit model" which blames the victims rather than engaging in systemic analysis and critique. On the other hand, a counter-argument is that unless overtly compensatory programmes are put into place there is a danger of perpetuating and reinforcing disadvantage. These counter-arguments do not necessarily emanate from conservative quarters and are often voiced by members of typically disadvantaged groups. Gadsden (1994), an African American, is a good example of this perspective.

Key challenges and issues in the South African context

1. Redefining "family" in family literacy
The concept of the family (typically seen as the nuclear family in developed countries) requires substantial revision in the light of serious social problems arising from violence, AIDS and migrancy. Such conditions have led to a breakdown and reordering of many family structures so that the care-givers in the family are often not the biological parents of the children, but could be relatives, community members or older siblings. A wider conceptualisation of families needs to include single parent families, extended families (often headed by grandmothers), orphaned families etc.

2. Finding a workable organisational structure
Family literacy programmes are by definition more complex than single focus interventions with adults or children. However, the constraints under which many programmes operate require simple, workable structures which do not place unrealistic demands on programme managers and educators.

3. Funding
A key problem faced by many family literacy programmes is funding. Family literacy is not yet seen as a mainstream activity by government programmes (possibly because it does not fit neatly into the various government directorates (ABET, ECD, etc) but by its very nature it requires integration and co-operation. Many family literacy programmes therefore rely on donor funding which is withering in the face of bilateral inter-government agreements and bursts of campaign fervour on the part of government for short-lived literacy initiatives.

4. Practitioner development
ABET and ECD are both under-resourced and under-funded areas in relation to school education. This impacts directly on the quality and quantity of practitioner development in both these fields. Very often, because of the low status of these fields, educators are not required to have high levels of education and receive very short and often inadequate training. Family literacy requires a sophisticated understanding of how literacy develops and learning happens but often practitioner training courses in ECD and ABET do not even touch on these more complex areas.

5. Changing attitudes to reading
South Africa does not have a strong reading culture. There are numerous reasons for this but the general result is that reading is not widely regarded as pleasurable or essential. In most people's minds it is functional, instrumental and most importantly

school-based. The idea of reading to children at home is foreign to many parents who cannot separate reading from direct instruction. The high correlation between low educational levels, poverty, overcrowding, poor lighting, lack of access to books and so on, makes it very difficult to change attitudes to reading and yet, unless attitudes are changed, all other interventions appear doomed to failure.

6. Language

Despite South Africa's constitution which equally validates all eleven official languages, the fact remains that English is the dominant language of the country. This has resulted in negative attitudes towards reading in African languages (the mother tongue of the vast majority of the population) and the publication of relatively few books in African languages. These attitudes persist despite the fact that it is indisputable that learning to read and being read to in one's mother tongue are most advantageous to the acquisition of literacy in both first and subsequent languages as well as to general learning in all areas.

7. Advocacy

Family literacy as project work is still in its infancy in South Africa. Aside from a few pioneering and exemplary projects, it is seen as an add-on or a "nice to have" rather than as a potent tool in breaking the cycles of poverty and disadvantage in the country.

Conclusion

Family literacy, in the sense of programmes designed to enhance the literacy skills of family members, has the potential to develop Family literacy in its other sense: literacy practices within the family. This is particularly important in the light, first, of the crisis within the family brought about by conditions such as violence, migrancy and AIDS; and second, of evidence that indicates a relationship between strong family literacy practices and achievement at school. Family literacy initiatives help to highlight the potentially crucial formative role of the family, in whatever form, in developing a literate nation. As such they deserve much greater attention and support than they currently receive.

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Building family relationships around literacy

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Abstract

An investigation in rural and urban areas (Kvalsvig et al, 1991) showed that Zulu and Sotho five year olds tended to get their information about schooling and literacy from older siblings rather than adults. It was evident from a content analysis of family discussions that adults felt ill-at-ease in a situation where young children attending school had the advantage of greater knowledge.

Although many years have passed since the original research, there has been little literature in isiZulu to interest or assist adults in these communities, and the cost of books, magazines and newspapers are beyond the pockets of many people. Both children and adults urgently need the wider access to information that literacy can bring. The KwaZulu-Natal Family Literacy Project has adopted an action plan which includes building and encouraging joint adult-child activities around literacy, engaging them in such activities as talking about pictures and stories. In an evaluative analysis it became obvious that in addition to learning literacy skills, this activity involved building a relationship between generations. The caregivers who had been members of literacy groups the longest showed considerable skill in engaging preschool children in discussions about pictures, and enthusiasm for the activity which would extend their knowledge and understanding of the world around them.

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Introduction

Communication and teaching in the home: Zulu and Sotho five year-olds, a 1991 study

An investigation in rural and urban areas (Kvalsvig et al, 1991) showed that Zulu and Sotho five year olds tended to get their information about schooling and literacy from older siblings rather than adults. Many of the adults in that study had not had much schooling themselves, and gave out negative messages, probably derived from their own unpleasant experiences of harsh discipline and didactic teaching methods in school. This was unlikely to make the prospect of entering primary school attractive to five year olds. It was evident from a content analysis of family discussions that adults felt ill at ease in a situation where even very young children had the advantage of greater knowledge of school.

There was no mention in any of the audio-taped sessions of the purpose of learning to read or write. The literacy-related topics were restricted to the more mechanical aspects of handling materials and copying letters, numbers, shapes and words. Within each of these topics the range of content material was restricted: vowels, single digit numbers, a circle.

The present study: A qualitative study of communication between adults and children taking part in the Family Literacy Project in KwaZulu-Natal

The present Family Literacy Project in KwaZulu-Natal serves communities where adults have had limited access to formal education and literacy rates are low. There are a number of reasons for this limited access. For many rural families the nearest primary school was, and is, far away from their homes, and small children make tiring journeys on foot each day. Many rural schools are of poor quality and there is consequently little incentive to maintain this effort. There has been little literature in isiZulu to interest or assist adults in these communities, and the costs of books, magazines and newspapers are beyond the pockets of many people. Consequently literacy has had very little place in local culture.

The environment for these families has changed in many respects since 1991. On the one hand there is a sense that a better life is possible following the change to a democratic government in 1994 and that educational and employment opportunities are no long deliberately withheld from the poor and disenfranchised. On the other hand there is confusion and dread as the HIV/AIDS epidemic threatens the health and well-being of this population. Both children and adults urgently need new windows on the world to help them make informed choices about how to conduct their lives. They need the wider access to information that literacy can bring.

Methods

Participants

The study participants came from mountainous areas of KwaZulu-Natal. The researchers asked the local Family Literacy Facilitators to recruit women into the study who were members of the literacy programme and caregivers to children between the ages of three and five years. Two groups of women were recruited from the literacy project – twelve women who had been part of the programme since its inception (approximately two years at that stage) and ten women who had recently joined the programme. For the purposes of comparison a further group of ten caregiver/child dyads from the same areas were recruited into the study. The criteria for selection into the comparison group were that they should have children between the ages of three and five years, and that their standard of education should be no higher than Grade 9. The groups were designated as follows:

Group 1: Participants who were not enrolled in the Family Literacy Project.
Group 2: Participants who had been enrolled in the project for less than two
         years or had attended very few sessions.
Group 3: Participants who had been enrolled in the project for more than two
         years and attended meetings regularly.

Procedure

Researchers were introduced to the participants at their homes by the Family Literacy Project facilitators. One researcher explained the procedure to the caregiver and then interviewed her while the second assistant set up the video-camera. There were four

parts to the procedure:
1. Participants were interviewed in isiZulu to obtain basic information on their family circumstances, and the way in which family members interacted with the three to five year olds in the family. The central issue was to determine what preparation for literacy was available to the children.
2. Once the interview was complete, the video camera was switched on and the caregiver and child were handed two pictures in sequence and asked to discuss them. The first was a picture of three children in traditional dress, and the second was a picture of unusual wattle and daub buildings.
3. The child was then given a children's book to look at, and to keep.
4. Finally, the child was given a drawing book and some crayons, and asked to draw something.

Results

The interview

In the majority of cases the caregivers were the mothers of the children, but there were also six grandmothers and one aunt. Participants in all three groups came from poverty-stricken areas with few resources. The responses to the questionnaires showed that:

- The groups were alike in most respects but differed with respect to reading. Group 3 caregivers had more printed material in their homes.
- Mothers and grandmothers were the main caregivers and children spend most of their time with other children. Most children attended preschool.
- Household chores were the main joint activities between caregivers and children, but Group 3 caregivers incorporated more educational activities into their interactions with children than did other groups.
- At home children in all three groups lacked access to toys, educational games and writing materials.
- Although the average literacy proficiency scores for Group 3 women was lower than that for Group 1 women, the long term participants in the Family Literacy Project utilised literacy more for practical purposes.

Communicating with children over pictures
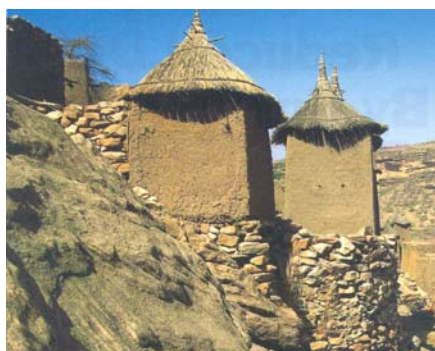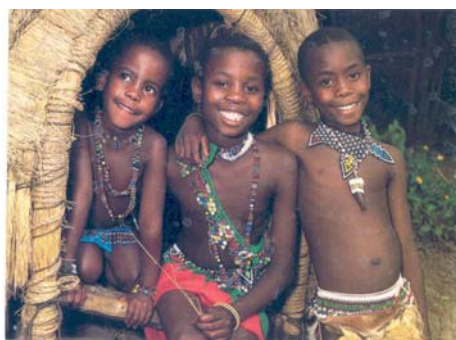
Some children were shy, overawed by the presence of strangers, and required skilful handling by the caregiver before their attention could be focused on the task at hand, which was to discuss the two pictures. However, even though the requirement to talk in front of strangers and a video camera was somewhat stressful, some of the children spoke freely to their caregivers (see Table 1).

Table 1: The average number of passages when children spoke

	Group 1 Average no. of passages	Group 2 Average no. of passages	Group 3 Average no. of passages
Passages where the child spoke	37	71	94
Boys only (n=9)	26	65	77
Girls only (n=23)	39	73	107

The average number of times a child spoke appeared to be a function of the caregiver's experience with the Family Literacy Project, and the gender of the child. Group 3 children talked much more frequently than Group 1 children, and Group 2 children were in between on this measure. Interestingly there were more girls than boys in all groups. Girls spoke more on average than boys, so presumably where there was a choice, caregivers chose to appear in front of the camera with a girl. The child's age did not appear to predict their readiness to talk.

Mediated learning

Interest in mediated learning has its origins in the work of Vygotsky (1983) who described children as learning from more experienced people in their culture. In order to explore this aspect of the caregivers' interactions with children, the content of the caregiver-child interaction with respect to the two pictures was coded according to the topic under discussion. The codes were grouped under the three main components of mediated learning: (1) emphasis or drawing attention to aspects of the topic, (2) elaboration on the topic, and (3) relating the topic to the child's experience. Table 2 shows that the Group 3 participants who had the most experience with the literacy course used all three components of mediation more frequently than other groups.

Table 2: Emphasis, elaboration and reference to the child's experience

	Group 1 Average no. of passages	Group 2 Average no. of passages	Group 3 Average no. of passages
The caregiver emphasized aspects of a picture	10	11	17
The caregiver elaborated on aspects of a picture	9	11	16
The objects in the picture were discussed with reference to the child's own experience	6	4	8

Emphasis

Emphasis was the simplest and most widely used category and served the purpose of fixing the child's attention on the task at hand and introducing the child to the parameters of the situation.

The caregivers sometimes drew attention to the pictures themselves. This was done almost exclusively by Group 3 caregivers. They introduced children to attractiveness of pictures and the mechanics of looking at them. For instance, they told the children: "you can't see anything at the back of the picture"; and "you should keep the pictures clean".

In all groups caregivers placed emphasis on the prominent objects within each picture (the children, the beads, the stones, the huts), but some pairs took this further by discussing a number of less obvious (shadows, sky or grass), and even imaginary ("is that a river?"), secondary objects. There were group differences in the mention of these secondary objects: Group 3 dyads managed to find more of the secondary aspects of the pictures to talk about than other groups, and often introduced objects which could be used in discussions of function. There was mention of 18 different secondary object categories by Group 3 participants, in contrast to 7 and 6 categories respectively from Groups 1 and 2.

Elaboration

The caregivers went beyond the objects in the picture, utilising them to make other points.

The most frequent elaborations were discussions about what the children in Picture 1 were doing, explanations of traditions (in what the children were wearing and how the huts were built), and mention of what the children in Picture 1 looked like (beautiful, clean, healthy), the quality of the huts in both pictures, and how they had been constructed. Group 3 caregivers spoke more about colours than the other two groups (16 instances as opposed to one in each of the other groups). Overall Group 3 elaborated on topics more frequently than other groups (Group 3:187 instances in total, Group 2: 100, Group 1: 91), but the frequency of elaboration varied within the group: the range was from 1 to 27 instances. Similarly it is not true to say that all Group 1 members used this strategy infrequently (range 3-20); within each group there were good and bad elaborators.

The skilful use of elaboration allowed the caregivers to insert large chunks of educational information into the conversations. The subject matter of the two pictures enabled caregivers to tell children about traditional practices, and caregivers from Groups 2 and 3 took advantage of the opportunity. One of the mothers used the opportunity to talk to her child about colours and to introduce her to some English words. Caregivers in all three groups used the opportunity for counting practice.

Reference to the child's own experience

The caregivers used references to the child's own experience in a number of ways. They asked:
> Who the children in the picture resembled
> Where the child had seen huts like the ones in the pictures.
> What the child would tell her teacher.
> Whether the child would like to wear the traditional finery

These kinds of questions mainly served the purpose of engaging the child's attention and co-operation. Some caregivers extended this and used the reference to suggest how the children should behave and what was valuable in the picture.

Desmond (2001) referred to the fact that participants in the Family Literacy Project sometimes said that they wanted a better life for their children when asked about their motivation for joining the project. In this study a Group 1 mother made the sad comment:
> *"Don't be like me because I'm not educated. You see I have built this house so that we'll stay in it, but it is not in a good condition. You need to behave well, because these are also girls like you [in picture 1]. All of them look beautiful. They are happy. You should always be happy, beautiful and clean as a child."*

Other caregivers involved the children in constructing a fantasy around the people and objects in the picture. There were several examples of fantasy games which clearly amused both child and caregiver.

Mother	*: Which house is yours here?*
Child	*: It's this one. (pointing at the picture)*
Mother	*: Mine is that one. Who is going to have the one on that other side?*
Child	*: It'll be mine.*
Mother	*: Do you see the tree?*
Child	*: Does it belong to your house?*
Mother	*: Do you want it?*
Child	*: Yes.*
Mother	*: Take it so that it'll be your family's one.*
Child	*: Here is my house.*
Mother	*: Do you see that it's beautiful over here?*
Child	*: Yes.*
Mother	*: We would be happy if our home was like this one?*
Child	*: Yes.*
Mother	*: Which house would you prefer to stay in?*
Child	*: I could stay in this one.*

Mother   : *You could stay in this one.*
Child   : *Yes.*
Mother   : *You could stay in this one and I could stay in this one and*
                 we'll visit one another.
Child   : *Yes.*

Type of utterance

Table 3 shows the coding of the utterances made by the caregivers into a number of categories. A simple question, for instance, was one where the answer was obvious to both parties, but an expanded question required some thought from the child.

Table 3: Type of utterance.

	Group 1 Average	Group 2 Average	Group 3 Average
Information	14	16	24
Label	4	4	7
Simple Question	20	20	32
Expanded Question	13	18	21
Prompt	3	4	7
Ask for co-operation	7	7	7
Disapproval	0	1	1
Correct	1	1	2
Confirm	9	10	18
Approval	0	0	1
Repetition	12	11	22
ALLCODES	81	91	141

Group 3 caregivers found more to say about the pictures than caregivers in either of the other two groups, and this was the case for all codes except *Ask for Co-operation* and *Disapproval*. Presumably Group 3 caregivers were able to engage children in discussing the pictures without resorting to demands for their attention. Probably their comments were more interesting to the children, and the children were more accustomed to talking about pictures. The difference between the Group 3 caregivers and the less experienced groups thus lies more in the content, fluency and frequency of their interactions than in utilising any special strategies to capture attention.

In this analysis Group 2 caregivers scored between Group 1 and Group 3 on *Information*, *Expanded Question*, *Prompt* and *Confirm*, and also have a somewhat higher total number of codes than Group 1 members. This probably indicates that they are becoming more confident about their ability to inform and teach children.

Overt expressions of approval in such statements was relatively rare in all groups. Some examples were:

> *"Good you're so grown up now because you can now see the hill, a house and stones."*
> *"Mmm, you are clever."*
> *"Wow! Ish tana."*

However, confirmatory statements and sounds ("Mmmm") were commonly used to signal approval. This was particularly so for Group 3 caregivers.

> *"Yes, the one wearing beads."*
> *"Hah! You've seen it properly."*
> *"Yes, these are girls."*

Repetition of the child's response was also used to signal confirmation and approval.

Handling reading and writing materials

The interviewer handed a book to the child, holding it upside down and the wrong way round in order to see how the participants handled this situation.

The pairs in Groups 1 and 2 showed a similar distribution of strategies to get the book the right way round, with an even distribution of caregivers or children taking the lead in turning the book, and most caregivers taking control of the book thereafter. What distinguished the Group 3 caregivers from the rest is the fact that they only intervened when the child had had a chance to turn the book but had not understood that this needed to be done. They allowed the child time to make the correct adjustments, and assisted with holding the book, rather than taking control of it. The dark arrows in Figure 1 demonstrate the most frequent choices made by the Group 3 caregivers.

Figure 1: Helping children with literacy basics
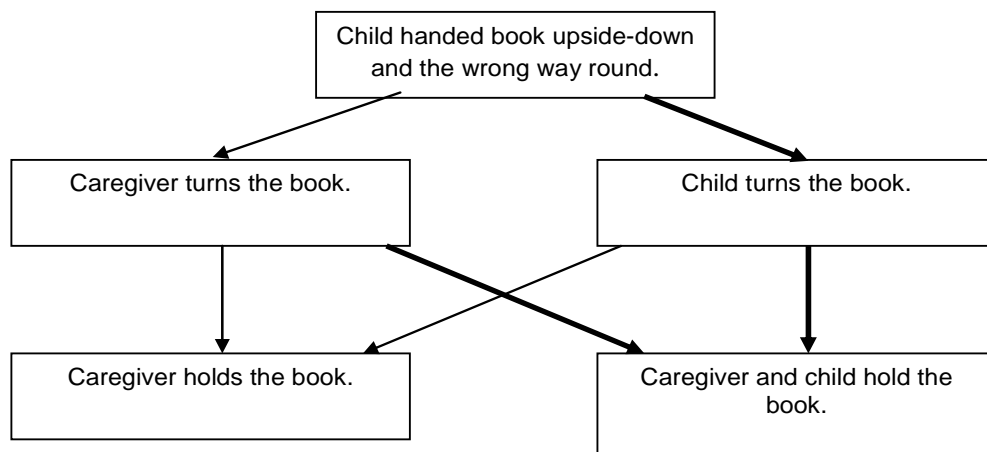
Group 3 caregivers had sufficient experience of this joint activity around books to allow the child an opportunity to explore the situation, and to work out the correct way to view the book. The children who didn't manage this were then helped. The Group 3 caregivers then sat close enough to the child to help with holding the book, and the process of looking at it became an enjoyable joint activity.

Drawing

In the final data collection section, the children were given a drawing book and crayons and asked to draw something. Caregivers opened the packet of crayons and selected crayons for the children to use in all three groups, and we could not detect any systematic differences in allowing the child to choose colours or to open the book. In most instances the caregiver took the lead. There were, however, differences in the drawings. About half of the children in all groups did produced scribbles, but 11 out of the 12 Group 3 children drew houses, people, other objects and letters as well, compared with 6 out of 10 in Group 2 and only 3 out of 10 in Group 1.

Conclusions

The caregivers who had been members of literacy groups the longest showed considerable skill in communicating with children, and enthusiasm for engaging children in discussions which would extend their knowledge and understanding of the world around them. The newcomers to literacy groups already displayed some of these attitudes and skills, although to a lesser extent. This progress was not only educational but allowed a closeness and enjoyment to develop between the two.

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An eye on the text and an eye on the future: multimodal family literacies in Gauteng

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Abstract

In this paper we present data from an ethnographic study of multimodal literacies involving adult family members and girl children, all of whom are high achievers in school literacy. The study was conducted in Gauteng. We investigate the micro-cultures in each family in relation to what kinds of textual practices count, by whom and for what ends. In this sense we attempt to understand the ideological nature of literacy practices (Street 1984, 1993, 1995) in each household in relation to how different roles and identities for the child both as reader and as subject are constituted and projected. Through an analysis of particular literacy events in these households, we show how a father, a grandmother and an aunt consciously scaffold for each child what counts for them as 'good reading practices'. These are not the same in each family. At the same time, we are interested in how each adult family member uses the practice of literacy to project and orientate the child towards certain forms of worldliness. Drawing on Appadurai's (2002) work on culture as a capacity worth strengthening in contexts of development, we pay attention to how each adult uses the practice of literacy to develop each girl's 'navigational capacities' their capacities to self-regulate, to map nodes and pathways of access in relation to aspirations and possible futures. These pathways include how to get access to various forms of linguistic, educational, cultural, and economic resources. We show how these pathways are both real and imaginary - the dusty roads which lead out of the 'shacks' and the 'townships' to the city of Johannesburg and beyond. We argue that the different ways in which adult family members shape and reshape the 'stuff' of literacy (Kress 2003) with and for their children has deep effects on children's orientations to the future both as readers and as subjects.

Background to the study

The data we present forms part of an ethnographic-style study of Children's Early Literacy Learning (CELL) carried out in the Cape, Gauteng and Limpopo Province between 2000 - 2001. The study draws on ethnographies of literacy in the New Literacy Studies tradition (Heath 1983; Street 1984; Prinsloo & Breier 1996; Barton & Hamilton 1998), focusing on children's literacy learning in homes, communities and schools in order to establish why some children, and not others, are successful acquirers of literacy. Language issues are a central concern, as there are eleven official languages in South Africa. The legacy of apartheid, with its history of inequitable distribution of educational and economic resources, has had a profound impact on the quality of education and the training of teachers. At a more macro level, poverty and hunger in many areas of the country make the conditions of possibility for successful early childhood education very difficult.

New Literacy Studies and Multimodal Semiotics

Our paper reflects some of the semantic and conceptual confusion around definitions of literacy in relation to new theorizations of literacy as fundamentally multimodal (Kress 1997; Kress and Van Leeuwen 2001). We work with the New Literacy Studies and multimodal semiotics as complementary frameworks for thinking about the social practice of literacy. We use the concept of 'literacy events' and 'literacy practices' from the New Literacy Studies to pinpoint specific events involving different literacies, in which adults and girl children are co-participants in activities which involve the use of multiple modes of communication: writing, speech, image and the body in performance. Each 'literacy event' is a multimodal communicative event. We show how these different modes are at work in each event and how the participants draw on different modes as resources in the making and transforming of meaning.

Whilst we focus on the micro-level of a specific episode involving multimodal texts, we draw on ethnographic data to situate these events within the ecology of the family, within the 'web of family life'(Barton 1994, p.149). We have found that the ethnographic data adds important ethical and interpretive dimensions to the micro-analysis of each literacy event: it has enabled us to situate the practice within a larger frame of meaning which makes sense to the participants themselves. We approach our analysis from the vantage point of the adults and claim that each event can be read semiotically, as a complex sign of how individuals within family groupings use the 'stuff' of literacy to shape and reshape their lives, according to their 'interests' in the moment of interaction. This interest arises out of their own social histories, their social locations in that interaction, and their awareness of the social environment in which the interaction takes place (Kress 2003). These interests are dynamic, in process and changing: what appears to be the focus of concern in these families at the time of the data collection may not be the same now.

Classification and Framing

We work with Bernstein's concepts of classification and framing (Bernstein 1996) to analyse the shaping of textual practices in the course of each family's joint activity with texts, and also to explore how principles for shaping texts were communicated in each literacy event. We also use these concepts to theoretically describe the specificity of each literacy event. Bernstein proposes that the selection of knowledge and the principles of communication invoked and enacted in any social practice actualise a range of messages. These messages communicate the 'regulative rules' or codes generative in, and of that practice. In turn such codes reflect power and control relations between social groups or agents and create the conditions of possibility for forms of practice, consciousness and identity.

In order to describe the selection of knowledge by experienced practitioners and the principles of communication within pedagogic practices, Bernstein introduces two analytic concepts: classification and framing. Classification refers to the *degree* of insulation or boundary strength between agents and practices, discourses and contexts. The strength of classification that is evoked and maintained between these categories (through a range of evaluative criteria and procedures) expresses the experienced practitioner's sense of the value and identity of the practice. It also enables acquirers

to recognise the specialisation of practice or what counts as knowledge in that practice or context. In general, the stronger the classification, the more specialised the discourses or practices are and the less socially distributed, but this is always *relational* and works in subtle ways.

The concept of classification allows us to describe the apparent outer limits or boundaries of a practice or context. However to analyse a social practice it is also necessary to develop an account of the form and content of interaction within a practice through the concept of framing. Framing refers to the degree of control that subjects (in this paper, adults and children) have over the selection and regulation of contents; and over what counts as appropriate interpretations, methods or techniques, and forms and styles of communication. The strength of framing provides the realization rules for the production of a practice. Experienced practitioners' realisation rules or sense of relevant meanings are made manifest in their habitual ways of being, doing and saying in interaction in that context. In this process, they model the realisation rules of the practice to novices. When framing is strong, there is a visible pedagogy and the transmitter (the teacher, parent, etc) has explicit control over the regulation of communication, selection of contents and evaluation criteria. Where framing is weak, an invisible pedagogy is operative. In such a case the acquirer has more apparent control over the selection of contents, and the regulation of communication and the rules for realizing appropriate practices are more implicit. Once again, this relationship works in subtle ways. Weak framing or invisible pedagogy may thwart the acquisition of particular discourses or practices, yet it may also create the conditions of possibility for strong socialisation into the order of things or high levels of innovation and creativity.

Case Study 1: Dineo and her father

> *You see, the generation of now are not like us, the generation of the 70s. I did not finish school because I was naughty. I don't want to blame my parents. But at least I was groomed. I want my children to be like me. I want to groom them not by thrashing, but by talking.* [Interview with Mr Kapa, Dineo's father]

Dineo Kapa is a nine year old girl who lives with her mother, father, brother and sister in a two roomed government-subsidised house in Thokosa township, on the outskirts of Johannesburg. They live next to an informal 'shack' settlement and the Khumalo Hostel, a site of bloody clashes during the 80s and 90s between hostel dwellers, who were migrant workers, and Thokosa township residents. Dineo is the middle child and is in Grade 3 at the local state primary school. The school caters mainly for Sesotho speaking children from the surrounding 'shack' settlements. Both Dineo's parents are unemployed. The only state support they receive is a child grant of R140.00 per month per child ($20). Her mother has a matriculation certificate and her father left school in Grade 10. Both parents are highly ambitious for their children, as Dineo's mother explains:

> *Dineo wishes to become a social worker when she grows. I pray to God that the closed doors can be opened so that I can take her to the level of her desire. That is my dream. I'm sure that this dream will become a reality one day because her father and I are positive.*

This support is manifest in a strong commitment to their children's education. They

spend several hours each afternoon assisting their children with their homework. This takes place regularly around the small table in a one-roomed 'shack' in the yard used as a kitchen. Often Dineo is assisted by her older brother. In the communal family bedroom where the children sleep on the floor, there is a small TV and the children watch the 'soapies' each evening with their parents.

The church plays a central role in the life of this family. Dineo accompanies her mother, brother and sister every Thursday evening to a local church meeting held at the back of a small four roomed house nearby. Mrs Kapa sings in the choir. The church is Pentecostal in orientation and the congregation worship in tongues, as well as in Sesotho and Isizulu. Mrs Kapa follows a combination of traditional African religious practices, mixed with forms of Christianity. When her children are sick, she first takes them to see the local sangoma (traditional healer) before taking them to a 'Western' medical doctor.

> *I do not mind doing everything there is to be done both along Christian and African traditional lifestyles...This does not give me a problem because my children are exposed to both worlds and they are the ones to make their own choices about this matter. I cannot say one is wrong, the other is good, it is only a matter of belief.*

This exposure to 'both worlds' also functions at the level of the family language practices. The children are exposed to the languages and cultures of both parents - Sesotho and isiZulu - but the father's language, Sesotho, has more status as Dineo has been sent to a school where Sesotho is the main African language spoken and taught. In the parents' eyes, these languages and cultures are part of the local, African world. It is English, the language and culture of the world beyond, which the parents are desperate for their children to have access to, as part of their 'grooming' for the future (Granville et al 1998). This 'world beyond' is the world of 'white schools' in town, literally and metaphorically places which give children access to exclusive, wealthy and powerful networks. Mrs Kapa talks bitterly about these differences.

> *I think the schools should have good teachers who can teach our children English. I am very proud that my children are doing well at school but my problem is, how can they compete with children from the white schools? There are many people who believe there cannot be equality in South Africa...If there is going to be any difference, it should be that the schools should have equal education for all the children.*

Along with English, literacy is a highly valued asset in this family, shaped by the parents' past experiences as literacy learners. Both of them describe their encounter with literacy as a kind of religious experience. As Mr Kapa recalled:

> *When I came to Std 3 [Grade 5], a light dawned on me. I was taught by a very great teacher, her name was Mrs Mofokeng. At the time I couldn't read or write, I could only count numbers, write my name and surname. By that time learning was difficult because I was always classified as a 'fool'...For the first time in my life with the help of Mrs Mofokeng I really understood what the mixture of vowels and consonants represented. She had patience for the 'fools'. I started to love my studies and I moved from the 'fools' to the 'clevers'.*

This sense of literacy learning as a form of revelation is revealed again in Dineo's mother's story of her first encounter with literacy:

When I got to read isiZulu, I think I was in Grade 3,the feeling of knowing how to read was phenomenal, I can't describe it, it was like magic…Knowing how to read and write is very interesting because you remember the time you could not do it and suddenly your eyes are open.

The literacy event which we explore below took place one afternoon around the communal kitchen table. This kind of activity took place on a regular basis, although it was usually the mother, not the father, who played the major pedagogical role. The event, which is recorded on video, is multimodal in its complex, multi-layered combination of the use of spoken and written language, sound, image, gesture, body and space. It is constructed as a *whole family performance* involving the father, the daughter, the mother and the brother who all see themselves as co-participants in the development of Dineo's literacy. What is enacted is a form of ritual, almost religious in its reverence for the book, and for the spoken and written word. Like the weekly religious meeting where people as a group support one physically and emotionally through prayer, song and talk, Dineo's family group themselves closely around her like a blanket. The mother stands behind her daughter with her hand resting reassuringly on her shoulder, while the father and Dineo sit at the table, the father holding the text for Dineo, guiding her patiently and carefully through each text - one in Sesotho, the other in English.

The father's focus here is overtly pedagogical: he is training Dineo in the practice of how to read aloud, how to *perform the text* with skill and accuracy. This event is not constructed as a pleasurable bedtime story reading activity, but as a form of work, of labour. He chooses the two books she is to read from – they are school books and, apart from the Bible, the only books in the house. The first book is a Sesotho school primer, 'Motheo' containing the story of Thabang who is going to town to sell his cow. It is an African version of 'Jack and the Beanstalk'. The second book is a Geography textbook with a unit entitled 'Is Life a Rocky Road?'which Dineo reads in English.

The father is very concerned with how the written text *sounds*. He pays a great deal of attention to Dineo's inflection and intonation patterns in her reading aloud of the Sesotho text. He is acutely sensitive to her pitch and volume, asking her to project and enunciate the words carefully, to 'speak up'. He stops her repeatedly in the flow of her reading to model exactly, and somewhat pedantically, how the Sesotho language should sound, how she should be inflecting her Sesotho phrasing. She repeats his inflection patterns, as the following example shows:

Father: (showing the reader to the camera) : *Ya, ha re ye he, tswela pele. [Yes, let's continue.]*
Dineo: *"Nna le Mme ha re ne letho le re ka le jang? ka--- [Me and my mother don't have anything to eat?]*
Father: Aa *[No]*
Dineo: ka ho (She pronounces the words incorrectly) reolo---
Father: (correcting her pronunciation) ho realo Thabang.
Dineo: Ho realo Thabang. *[Said Thabang.]*
Father: *Thabang a kere ke ena a tjong jwalo ho ntho, ho monna ya mokgutswane. [Thabang said that to the short man.]*

On one level, the father's focus on inflection and intonation is developing Dineo's coding competence. Effective literacy draws on a range of practices including the skill of breaking the code of written texts by recognising and using the alphabet, sounds in words, spelling, and structural conventions and patterns. However, Sesotho as a spoken language is a tonal language which depends on subtle variations of pitch and tone to inflect different meanings. Thus, on another level the father's focus on phonological features shows his appreciation of the relation between coding competence and semantic competence in reading aloud Sesotho texts. Pitch and tone *are* meaning. He is demonstrating and modelling that *the meaning of this story is in the performance*. Reading aloud is akin to oral storytelling: it requires shifts and intonations, an awareness of audience and an attention to poetics associated with oral performance (Scheub 1975; Hofmeyr 1994; Gunner 2003)

This attention to the performance is evident in the next sequence in which he models how greetings should be inflected when telling a story:

> Dineo: *Kgotso monna e---   [My greetings to you Mr---]*
> Father*: Ee butle, butle (emphasizing the pitch, tone) kgotso___ [No, wait, wait. My greetings___]*
> Dineo: *'Kgotso monna e mokgutswane,ho dumedisa Thabang ka thabo e kgolo. O ya kae? ['Greetings to you short man,' said Thabang with excitement. 'Where are you going?']*
> F: *Butle he, ho tsamaiwa ho thwa (emphasis on tone, pitch) Kgotso monna e mokgutswane, ho dumedisa Thabang ka thabo e kgolo. O ya kae? (pointing to the picture in the book) o tloha mona monna ya mokgutswane. Ha re eme moo, tswela pele. [Wait, this is how you should read. 'Greetings to you short man,' said Thabang with excitement. 'Where are you going?' The short man comes from here. Read.]*

The father's insistence on the 'correct' pronunciation signals his interests in relation to a form of linguistic purity as well as ethnic pride in relation to the Sesotho language. Implicit in his pedagogy is a dissatisfaction with Dineo's school teachers, whom he criticizes for their 'incorrect' pronunciation of his language:

> *I want them [my children] to follow our culture, I tell them that they are Sothos and must speak Sesotho...You know with their homework, I find that some of the teachers do not know Sesotho, not that I am angry about it, they say that this is so-and-so and I say it is not correct.*

The father's interest in performance is further shown when he indicates to her how the written text contains clues, like punctuation marks, which guide the reader in how the text is to be read. He is consciously developing her meta-linguistic awareness. Here he introduces her to the concept of a 'fullstop':

> Father: *Ho. (emphasis on pronunciation) Ho realo monna eo, kgutlo. Ke eng kgutlo? ['No. Said the man.' Fullstop. What is a fullstop?]*
> Dineo: *Ke fullstop. [It's a fullstop.]*
> Father: *Fullstop, wa bona he. (pointing at the section to be read) Ha re qhale he, ke mona he. [Fullstop. Let's start afresh.]*

After the reading of the Sesotho story, the father turns his attention to teaching Dineo how to read English correctly. When Dineo is reading the Geography book, he also

draws her attention to the 'correct' pronunciation and inflection of sentences and phrases in English, modelling how she should be saying them. As he did with Sesotho, he is demonstrating his criteria of appropriateness in relation to standard spoken English and communicates normative criteria for reading English. As they read this book, the father continues to emphasise inflection, pitch and tone but then stops at the end of a sentence to query the meaning of the word, 'rock'. Here he calls on Dineo's mother for help:

> Father: (asking the wife) *Kana ke eng rock? Rock e jwang mm, ba bua ka eng mo?* (asking the wife) *What is a rock? How is a rock? What are they referring to here?*
> Mother: *Ke ntho eo o tholang Geography? [It's something that you get in Geography?]*
> Father: *mm...*
> Dineo: (points to the picture of the rock)

This is a significant moment in which, for the first time, Dineo takes the initiative, asserting her visual literacy skills as she helps her parents to understand 'rock' by pointing to the visual text on the page. It is a clear example of the insertion of the discourse of school in the home, where the child uses her knowledge to support her parents' understandings. But it is also significant because even though the father does not initially know what 'a rock' means, he still reads the sentence aloud with perfect inflections, caesuras and emphases in a manner that communicates that 'a rock' refers to some kind of object. Through this partitioning, he is demonstrating that text consists of units of meaning which are integrated into a textual whole.
Dineo's father is constituting and projecting Dineo as a certain kind of reader, invoking strong classification over the meaning of the text in both the Sesotho and English texts. His emphasis on ostensive meanings, inflection and tone, and reading as performance together communicate the message that while texts are meaningful, this meaning is closed. The meaning is given, and the duty or task of the reader is to extract 'the' meaning in the text, from the text. Taken together, these practices signify that there is a 'right' way to read the text - which he authorizes - and that learning is achieved by adhering to the 'right' way. These are the practices around language which count, and not others.

The activity is also strongly framed. The father constructs Dineo as a learner who must learn to decode the meaning of the text and relay it appropriately through linguistic resources. His practices do not communicate to Dineo that she is a participant reader who has a relation to the text beyond the world inscribed in the text. She is not asked what she believes or thinks, nor recruited to participate in meaning making beyond the level of the linguistic inflection and translation. The father's practices realise his taken-for-granted or implicit constructs of the relation between the reader and the text and communicates the message that the text 'exists': she must receive and reproduce it, not transform it.

Through all these textual practices Dineo learns how to read, what counts as reading and what it means to be a reader all of which transform her consciousness, experience and identity. As long as she continues to reads textual meanings as closed, she may become strongly socialised into the order of things represented in the text because she takes them as 'truth', as the way things are and ought to be and lives them. Alternately, precisely because she does not invest her 'self' in interpreting it, she may be relatively inured to messages about social relations and identity communicated in

and through texts. However, if the boundaries of texts do not become more permeable, more open to interpretation, it is unlikely that her identity and consciousness will be radically transformed by texts. Furthermore, if she does not develop other orientations and constructs of text through participation in other forms of literate practice, she may begin to find the demands of school learning becoming more and more difficult as she proceeds to higher levels. But, perhaps as she learns literacy in school and other contexts she may transform her parents' construct of texts.

In relation to Dineo *as subject*, we think this event shows Dineo's father 'grooming' her for the future. He is consciously developing and modelling certain kinds of navigational capacities which he believes will enable her to 'open the closed doors' to her aspirations. A key navigational capacity is skill in literacy and language. He emphasises the value of bilingual literacy: she needs to know how to read an indigenous African language as part of maintaining her local ethnic identity, and she needs to know English as part of a global identity, her identity beyond the township. In insisting on *his* language as the language which has value in the home (and not the mother's language, isiZulu), he is asserting certain forms of linguistic patriarchy in this household. Through his interest in reading as performance he is developing Dineo's navigational capacities in relation to specific local oral cultural practices, which are an integral part of church, schools, and homes.

Speaking more broadly, it seems to us that Dineo's parents are quite comfortable exposing and projecting her into an environment in which diversity is the norm. Johannesburg, the only global city on the African continent, is a cosmopolitan city, replete with a multiplicity of registers in which it is African, European and American (Mbembe & Nuttall 2004). Dineo and her family are part of this city, and like everyone else, negotiating what it means to be both part of the West and the non-West, the African. Her parents actively encourage her to participate in multiple worlds: it is naturalised practice in the households that the children are exposed to Christian and African traditional lifestyles. Through these hybrid practices, the children are introduced to forms of worldliness, beliefs that the future generation needs to be part of multiple 'elsewheres'. Dineo is not a passive recipient of these ideas: how she will react, resist and transform these ideas and practices remains to be seen. However, how she takes hold of and transforms these forms of linguistic and cosmopolitan capital for a productive future depends to a large extent on the material conditions of Dineo's life: on the day of this reading event, her mother and father were preparing to send all three children to the rural family home in KwaZulu-Natal because there was no money for food.

Case Study 2: Puleng and her grandmother

Puleng is an eight year girl who lives with her grandparents, Mr and Mrs Mohale, in the township of Sharpeville in Southern Gauteng, 85 kms south of Johannesburg. In accordance with African extended family practices, Puleng's primary caregiver is her grandmother, who pays for her schooling, clothing and other basic needs. Puleng's mother is completing her studies at a technical college, and she sees Puleng during study breaks. All members of the Mohale family have qualifications beyond matriculation and are employed. Mrs Mohale's father was a high school principal and her mother a nurse. Mrs Mohale comes from a religious family, and reads the bible every day.

The family can be described as middle class and live in a spacious house in Sharpeville, famous for the 1961 resistance against the apartheid pass laws. The house is located in a low-income area and surrounded by typical 'match box' four-roomed houses built during the apartheid era. There is concern in the family about the 'invasion' of shack dwellings in the area since the ANC government came to power in 1994. According to the family, the high crime levels prevalent in the township are associated with 'foreigners' and 'criminals' who live in these shacks.

Puleng's safety is a source of constant worry for Mrs Mohale.

> *Nowadays when you walk out of your workplace you are just panicking, you are in a hurry to be home to see if the child is safe. Everybody is worried about their children's safety…you know there are so many rapes of little children like this, people have taken to smoking dagga, I don't know if is it frustration or what, it is so unsafe, it is so unsafe.*

As a result she does not allow her grandchild to play in the streets, unlike other children in the neighbourhood. She encourages girls in the neighbourhood to play in Puleng's house, where there is a large garage for play and access to a range of resources including television, a computer, toys and books. Boys are not allowed to come and play. Mrs Mohale compares the state of things now to when she was young:

> *When I was a child we were free, we could go anywhere…we nowadays don't let our eyes off our children for less than thirty minutes…we ask people who are not at work to watch out for our children, so that we can be 'township eyes' for each other. I am trying to teach Puleng how to become my eyes.*

Unlike other children in the neighbourhood who go to local schools in the township, Puleng attends a 'town' school and uses a taxi every morning to get there. She is in Grade 2. Puleng likes school, is doing very well there and loves the social life of school. Her school was a segregated whites-only Afrikaans medium school until 1994. It switched to dual-medium in 1995, when English was introduced as a medium of instruction and when the school began admitting children from other languages and races. Lessons are conducted in Afrikaans and English: Afrikaans speaking children attend the Afrikaans classes and mainly black African children attend the English classes. This means that English is taught as a first language, Afrikaans as a second language, and Sesotho is introduced in Grade 5 as a third language.

The family has a rich history in multilingual proficiency in South African languages. Puleng's grandfather is Setswana speaking and Mrs Mohale speaks Northern Sotho. Puleng's great-grandfather was fluent in Afrikaans. The family also speak English. In everyday communication, family members tend to switch between languages, especially Sesotho, Setswana and English. The family values multilingualism: family interaction patterns draw on sophisticated forms of multilingual language play and the children are actively encouraged to learn and use many languages as part of their cultural and intellectual development. This core value of multilingualism is explicitly linked by Mrs Mohale with *ubuntu*, an important concept among South African Africans expressing a sense of caring and compassion for others, a belief that each person's humanity is bound up in the humanity of others. Learning and valuing languages other than your own (including Afrikaans, what used to be the oppressor's

language) is part of *ubuntu,* as Mrs Mohale makes clear in this bilingual conversation with Puleng:

> Mrs Mohale: *So what did you do the whole day* [at school] *because Mrs Putter* [Puleng's teacher*] was not around ?* [Sesotho]
> Puleng*: They took us to an Afrikaans class. We could not hear a thing. Me and my friends played and made drawings because we did not understand the Afrikaans teacher.* [Sesotho]
> Mrs Mohale: *Puleng, you have to learn all languages. Afrikaans is a language as well.[*Sesotho] *If you do not know other languages you will become stupid.*[English]
> Puleng: *Mama, I know Afrikaans* [English]. *But today the teacher used difficult words* [Sesotho]

Mrs Mohale takes an active interest in Puleng's education, particularly her literacy and language activities. There is a strong oral storytelling tradition in her family, particularly from Mrs Mohale's father, who believed that 'children can make decisions out of the story and relate them to their everyday life'. Storytelling and story reading at bedtime is a nightly ritual, taking place after Puleng has been bathed, fed and watched some television. Mrs Mohale routinely selects the storybooks for Puleng from the Sharpeville library which she passes on her way home from work. These books are always in English.

In this bedtime story reading event, which takes place in Puleng's bedroom, the grandmother sits upright on the bed with her grandchild either lying down or sitting beside her. The event is being filmed by Puleng's aunt, described below as the camera operator, who is also an assistant researcher on the literacy learning project. The bedtime event is multimodal, encompassing written and spoken language, image, gesture and performance. It begins with story reading in English, followed by oral storytelling in Sesotho or English. We see the two activities as integrated and part of the flow of everyday life in this household. Mrs Mohale's style is strongly pedagogical in orientation, with her controlling the content and the activity of reading and story telling.

The book chosen for story reading tonight is a picture book called *Fiona the Elephant*. It tells the tale of a little elephant called Fiona who has a problem remembering anything. Her family is very good at remembering things and she asks them for help. They give her some tips which Fiona puts into practice by the end of the story. The grandmother's reading strategies consist of paging systematically through the text, reading it aloud, interspersing the written language and images with different kinds of commentary. She makes clear connections for the child between the visual and verbal text, pointing out the links between the names of the characters and the images of them. For example,

> Granny: *Okay Fiona on the picture. You see, she's sitting in the, in the, on the sofa and---*
> Camera operator: *Se ka sheba nna [Don't look at me.]*
> Puleng: (Blinking her eyes)
> Granny: *Then ...they say here Fiona had...*(paging through the book) *what do they say ...they say here Fiona had a problem remembering ...* (looking at the camera) *you see* (Puleng seems more interested in the camera than the book at this stage.)
> Granny: (Pointing in the book.) *This book is about a little elephant called Fiona. She*

had a big problem she couldn't remember anything. You see here's Fiona. Fiona's mother always remembered where she put things. Can you see, here's Fiona's mother...

The grandmother consciously tries to recruit Puleng to focus on the text. Her strategy is to begin with the images to arouse her interest, and then to link the visual text to the written text, posing questions about what the verbal text 'says' and then summarising the gist of the content. Her strategy models a way of talking about, responding to and interpreting information from visual and written texts, all of which are contributing to the development of Puleng's multimodal literacy. Puleng actively participates in this activity by taking charge of one area: reminding her granny to show the camera operator each new visual text as it is revealed.

Half way through the story reading, Puleng recruits the practice of making these links between the visual and the written text when she also starts to point to the pictures. In the following sequence, the grandmother points out and labels the main characters, using her index finger to identify the words as she articulates them and to frame Puleng's attention. She returns regularly to the main threads of the story, providing the child with a coherent narrative thread and to keep her fixed on the object of study.

> Granny: *Can you see, here's Fiona's father, he could do all her aunty Sofy's best recipes. Here are eh... Fiona's father is doing a pie the recipe she got from aunty Sofy, can you see?*
> Puleng: *Yes*
> Granny: *Mmm you can see Fiona's father? Can you remember aunty Sofy's best recipes? Here is aunty Sofy (showing the book to the camera) can you see aunty Sofy?*
> Puleng: *Mmm*

A key strategy she uses is to move fluidly from the meaning of specific parts of the text to how it relates to the text as a whole. She focuses on units of meaning by elaborating on the story, inserting new information, picking up on meanings which are not clear or explicit, and generally acting as a literacy mediator, someone who mediates the text for someone else, in this case, the child. At certain points, she reiterates what the text 'means' in her own words, providing her grandchild with the grounds for knowledge making. Here is an example:

> Granny: *Her best friend was?*
> Puleng: *Felicity.*
> Granny: *Ja Fiona's best friend was Felicity. They went they signed up to go to Jerry eh uncle Jerry's gym, can you see, Jerry's gym it's called. That's where they are going to play games there at the gym. (pointing to pictures) Here's Fiona and her friends Felicity. There they went to the gym. But the day before the class Fiona began to worry. The class was tomorrow, Fiona was now worried. What if she forgot her gym clothes? What if she forgot to go to the class at all? Fiona began to ask her family to help, can you see?*
> Puleng: *(nodding her head)*
> Granny: *She's worried, can you see she's very worried. Here's Fiona she's worried because she knows she has a problem in remembering anything.*

This literacy event involves a weaker classification of texts and their meanings than with Dineos' father. The grandmother opens up the boundaries of textual practices by recruiting a wider range of strategies that demand and realise more reader involvement in decoding the text. She carefully paces and sequences the process of

reading aloud from the text page by page, moving in and out of the text with explanatory and interpretative comments on the basis of intra and extra textual information. Her comments involve explanations, definitions, re-capping of narrative sequence, anticipation of events, reiteration of the main ideas, making the plot and themes constantly explicit, summarising, paraphrasing and interpreting for the child. Through these practices the grandmother is demonstrating and modelling the rules of talking about, responding to and interpreting images and written texts. She is both focussing on literacy as a set of sub-skills like predicting, summarising and interpreting, linking verbal text and image, and at the same time showing how written and visual material can be a backdrop for talk and information retrieval. These textual practices model the metacognitive strategies used by experienced readers in making meaning from text.

Although the classification of textual meanings and practices is weaker than those in Dineo's home, and despite the grandmother's stronger control (and thus weaker framing) over the text, classification is nevertheless strong. This is because despite the range of strategies she employs, all are oriented to mediating to Puleng how to crack the semantic code given in the text. Like Dineo's father, the grandmother is oriented to 'the' meaning of the text and communicates the message that the role of the reader is to uncover the meaning to be found *in* the text. Thus the relation between textual practice and meaning remains relatively closed and stable. Furthermore, the grandmother chooses what to focus on, and how to explore it. She regulates Dineo's role, doing most of the talking. Thus Puleng exerts only fractionally more control over interaction with the text than Dineo (like directing her grandmother to include the video camera operator).

Midway through the story reading, the grandmother changes her orientation to the text. Instead of focussing on what the text literally means, she focuses on the moral lessons and implications of the story, demonstrating to Puleng that texts contain messages about how we ought to behave. In the following extract she forges connections between Fiona the elephant who cannot remember her school bag, and Puleng the child from Sharpeville, who also needs help remembering her school books, lunch box and homework. Instead of spelling the connection out explicitly, she does it more implicitly, by asking Puleng a series of yes/no questions much like a teacher might do in class, guiding her to accept the moral lesson. The protagonist of the text subtly shifts from Fiona to Puleng and the message of the text shifts from Fiona the elephant who forgets things to 'you' addressed to Puleng, the subject.

> Granny: *Fiona had a real problem she couldn't remember anything, can you see?*
> Puleng: *Yes.*
> Granny: *Can you remember all your things before you go to school*?
> Puleng: *Yes.*
> Granny: (pointing in the book*) To pack up everything, to take your school bag, to pack up your homework, to take your lunch box before you catch your school bus?*
> Puleng: *Yes.*
> Granny: *You must try to remember everything before you go to school. All your things when going to school*. (pointing in the book)

Through this process, she communicates the broad message that texts can be invoked for moral and instructional purposes that they can teach us forms of appropriate

conduct. More specifically she demonstrates to Puleng that there are connections between the textual world and the reader's world -in effect, that she is inscribed in the text. She communicates the message that texts are porous, metaphorical (can stand for something else) and can offer us, the reader, other ways of seeing and being. By establishing a relation between Puleng and the text, she gives Puleng a stake in the act of reading and inserts Puleng's self into the text. This opens up textual meanings and changes Puleng's role as reader, initiating the assertion of a reader's voice. She communicates the message that 'you are in the text and the text is in you'.

The story reading is followed immediately by oral storytelling in which the grandmother relates a version of 'Little Red Riding Hood' in English, called 'Little Red Riding Hood and the Jackal'. She follows this story with a Sesotho version of Tselane, a well-known South African folkloric tale. Both stories are about innocent young girls who unwittingly are led astray by evil forces - jackals or cannibals disguised as mothers or grandmothers who want to devour them. Mrs Mohale ends the tale of Little Red Riding Hood with a strong cautionary note to Puleng:

> Granny: *And they took out grandmother's body out of the jackal...*
> Puleng: *Mm. (Yes).*
> Granny: *And her mother asked her, 'Did you, why did you not use the road I asked you to use?'...she did not listen...*
> Puleng: *To her mother.*
> Granny: *To her mother. If she had used the road on her left, she could have gone to her, come to her granny's place quickly, and gave her food before the jackal swallowed her granny. And when she goes to her grandmother, she must not have stopped on the road and talked to ...eh, jackals. Jackals are crooks. They make you their friends, and they are just your ?*
> Puleng & Granny: *(together) Bad friends!*
> Puleng: *And why did the jackal follow Little Red Riding Hood to her grandmother?*
> Granny: *The jackal is a cruel animal.*
> Puleng: *Aowa! (Really!)*
> Granny: *He is cruel. He eats up people. Now Little Red Riding Hood should not have listened to a jackal. A jackal is a bad friend, mm? Okay? That's why you must not listen to any bad friends on the road. When you are sent somewhere, you go there and come back like your mother has sent you. If anybody like your father is sending you, go there and come back. Don't stop on the way and talk to your friends, because they will tell you wrong things, and send you to the wrong place.*

Mrs Mohale then explicitly contrasts Little Red Riding Hood with the story of Tselane, who is rescued from danger by the forces of good, in the form of an alert, caring community. In the story of Tselane, the mother has to go to work, and leaves Tselane by herself, locked up in the house. The cannibal giant Dimo comes to the house, knocks on the door and offers Tselane something to eat. She recognises his voice and refuses to open the door. He swallows an iron and comes back with a 'sweet thin voice'. This time Tselane opens the door, the cannibal grabs her, puts her in a sack and goes to have a drink in a shebeen before feasting on her 'soft meat'. But a group of kindly people in the bar see the sack shaking, realise what's going on, make the giant drunk, free Tselane and fill the sack with scorpions and snakes. The cannibal wakes up, opens his sack and is killed by the scorpions. At the end of the tale of Tselane, Mrs Mohale draws out a different lesson for her granddaughter:

Granny: *Ee. E tla re ha o tsamaile, mohlomong, o be o lahleha mo "polekeng" ye nngwe batho ba a go thusa. A ba swane le jackal. (When you have gone somewhere, perhaps you get lost at a certain place, some people help you. They are not like jackal).*
Puleng : *Jackal.*
Granny : *Mm. A ke re? (Yes. Okay?)*
Puleng : (Puleng nods her head.)
Granny : *Mo lefatsheng, batho ba bangwe ba "goo". Ha ba bona e le sono ka wena, o le lahlegile, o utswitswe ke batho, ba a go thusa, ba go apese di aparo tse "skoon", ba go ntshe ka mo mokotleng, ba go balehise, ba ho ise ga lena gape, a ke re?(O dumela ka hlogo gape, Puleng) Ba bangwe a ba , a ba "good", a ke re?* (Puleng nods her head again).
(Some people are bad. Some people are…Here on earth, some people are good. When they see that you are in trouble, when you are lost, when you have been stolen by other people, they help you (Puleng nods her head.), and dress you in clean clothes, and take you out of the sack, and make you flee back to your home, okay? (Puleng nods her head again). Some are ?
Puleng: (Together with Granny) *Good.*

Mrs Mohale's changes in her orientation during the course of this event from working with the surface meaning of the text to interpreting and recruiting the text for normative purposes. These shifts realize her interests as a grandmother, teacher and guardian of this child. She recruits the norms of behaviour of 'Fiona the Elephant', 'Little Red Riding Hood' and 'Tselane' to communicate her criteria of appropriate conduct that she expects of Puleng. Thus she uses books and oral stories to construct moral lessons about how to act and behave in the same way that the Bible provides instruction to its readers on the 'right' way to live. Like Dineo's father, she works with two languages - English and Sesotho - and is particularly concerned to use Sesotho because Puleng will only learn to read and write her home language, Sesotho, in Grade 5.

Weakening the classification and framing of textual practices increases the potential for textual practices to transform consciousness and identity. On one hand, since more of the reader/listener is inserted into the process, it may be difficult for the reader/listener to resist being transformed. On the other hand it enables the reader/listener to access other worlds, other ways of being which may in turn enable him or her to change the order of things.

Finally, it is notable that on the one hand the grandmother's practices offer structure and containment, and model important strategies for 'cracking' the code in any text. On the other hand they orient Puleng to sub-texts and implications, and alert her that there are lessons to be drawn from every activity. Traditionally these have been highly valued skills and dispositions in school learning. Thus these textual practices may offer a sound foundation for her learning career in school.

Mrs Mohale is consciously developing Puleng's capacity for care of the self, in the sense of self-regulation and self-surveillance. She has an acute sense of the dangers of township life and wants to instil in her 'a sense of responsibility'. Puleng is Little Red Riding Hood on her way to see her grandmother and the road is full of jackals. Puleng is Tselane, at home alone whilst her mother is at work, a child who has to know how to protect herself against 'cannibals' who disguise themselves as mothers. Like her father before her, Mrs Mohale is determined to make her grandchild aware of the

importance of being obedient. She is completely overt in how she uses the text to actualise different forms of knowing, which she manipulates to regulate Puleng. She is intent on developing Puleng's navigational strategies for a circumscribed world of the township in which she lives, in the belief that these are life skills which she can use anywhere. Drawing on her own deep knowledge of local oral storytelling practices (through her own history of these practices), she uses these representational resources to educate Puleng, to form her character and to socialise her in ways that school does not do. She models values of the family and the local community: how tales are meant to teach us how to live. In this potent mix of African traditional storytelling practices, and contemporary Western-style story reading, Puleng is exposed to different forms of knowledge in different modes, in different languages and in different cultures. These are particular forms of worldliness, of cosmopolitan culture, which should stand her in good stead for her future.

Case Study 3: Margot and her aunt

Margot is a six year old girl, the second child in an English speaking, middle class family living in Yeoville, a suburb bordering on the inner city of Johannesburg. She lives with her parents and her older brother. Her parents have a history of political activism in the 'white left' and were involved in the ANC (African National Congress) struggle for liberation. They have chosen to live in Yeoville for political and social reasons: it is a strongly multicultural, multilingual suburb, containing white and black middle and lower class families, immigrants from Zaire, Nigeria, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and a small group of orthodox Jewish families. Unemployment in the area is quite high and it is notorious for drug-dealing and prostitution.

Margot's parents are well-educated and employed: her mother is an early childhood development educator and her father works for the government in land affairs. Margot is a monolingual English speaker although her ancestry is Setswana. She understands rudimentary isiZulu but does not speak it. She attends a private, well-resourced English medium pre-school close by and is the oldest child in the school. She is very proud of this fact as she is regarded as 'the cleverest' and has a certain kind of status as a result. She has not yet learnt how to read and write, as this begins formally at the age of seven when she enters Grade 1.

Margot leads an active life, following the trends of her peer group, listens to popular music, watches videos and has access to multiple educational and electronic resources. The family read newspapers regularly and the family fridge is covered with schedules, timetables, school notices, children's drawing and notes. Margot is very fond of books and she often reads with her aunt, Kathy, to whom she is very close. She loves listening to stories, jokes and chatter and she is an accomplished conversationalist both with her peers and adults. She knows her way around the computer but does not often choose to play games on it unless inspired by another child. Margot and her friend Sara, who lives next door, spend a lot of time on fantasy play.

The literacy event we focus on takes place around the kitchen table in the family home. There are five participants: Margot, her mother, her brother Sam, her aunt

Kathy and her friend Sara, who is four years old. The family is looking at buying a house. Newspapers are spread out. Margot and Sara are seated at the table, paging through the Houses for Sale advertisements. These images form the focus of the children's attention and conversation:

> Margot: (points to a photograph in a newspaper advertisement) *I think that this house is stupid. It's too small, and it hasn't got a pool.*
> Sara: *Ja, it's stupid.*
> Margot: (points to another advert with photograph) *Look at this one. Look here Sara, look. Hey Mum, this one is okay, see here. Look Kathy, look Sam. Come and look Mum!!*
> Sara: (Leaning over to see). *Why?*
> Margot: *It's got a nice garden. Look at all the trees.*
> Sara: *Those aren't trees. They are too small.*

Not only do the children use images as a source of basic information about what a house looks like (its size and attributes) but they also use the images to make critical and comparative judgements on what constitutes a 'stupid' 'nice' or 'okay' house. They are able to retrieve visual information and link it to their background knowledge. What is striking is the confidence with which these opinions are expressed, the sureness of the judgements and the unshakeable knowledge of what constitutes a 'good' house and a 'bad' house.

This is a family activity with adults present, but unlike in Dineo's or Puleng's case, it is not led by the parent, but by the children, principally Margot. Margot regulates everyone's attention, including them in the event by asking questions, commenting on what she sees, and pointing out interesting details. Margot is showing all the practices of a skilful reader without yet being able to decode the written text. In the following extract, Kathy plays a more directive, pedagogical role by helping Margot to understand and locate the generic features of the house for sale advertisement. She playfully scaffolds the interaction by arousing Margot's interest in looking for 'the price' in the text. This leads into an extended conversation on 'the price' and the meaning of the terms 'estate agent'. The tone throughout is playful and witty, led by the children. Here Margot recruits Kathy's attention and calls upon her the make the 'text' the object of her activity by asking her specific questions around the meanings of words, and how to interpret the genre of the text. Margot's aunt is acknowledged as a resource for increasing textual knowledge, rather than an 'authority' who has the last word.

> Margot: (Turning the page). *Look at this one Mum.* (Her mother looks with her). *It's good hey!*
> Kathy: *Ja, but I think that it's a bit expensive.*
> Margot: *How do you know?*
> Kathy: *I can see the price.*
> Margot: *Where's the price Kathy? Show me the price Kathy. Does this say the price Kathy?* (points to a word).
> Kathy: *No that says the name of the estate agents.*
> Sara and Margot: *What's an estate agent?*
> Kathy: *That's someone who sells houses to other people.*
> Margot: *Like a kind of a shop person.*
> Sara: *No silly* (laughs). *We don't buy houses in shops.*

> Margot*: I never said we did. But a 'stateagent' is a kind of a person like a person, like someone, like a person who sells things, like, like in a shop. Hey Kathy.*

A few minutes later the two girls have fetched pens and paper and are busy writing, constructing their own advertisement for the house they would like. In this seamless switch from reading text and image to producing text and image, the girls show a fluid, comfortable relation to writing as a productive resource for recording, categorising and making visible (in every sense of the word) important family information. They already have an understanding of what writing is, and the work it can do. They draw on a range of familiar semiotic resources which they playfully and effortlessly transform for their own interests, as they enter into a sophisticated form of fantasy play which is both a parody of reading and writing, and of buying a house. During the course of this transformation, Kathy asks them about what they are writing, demonstrating a much clearer and explicit attention to pedagogical practice. However, she never makes explicit the criteria for writing, which makes her pedagogy invisible. Kathy's relationship to Margot's attempts at writing is particularly significant. Margot is not writing actual words – she is drawing wavy lines or squiggles across the page. And yet Kathy constantly communicates the message to her, that her writing is meaningful and she is 'saying' something.

> Kathy: *What are you writing Margot?*
> Margot: *I'm writing about the houses.*
> Kathy: *Oh. That's interesting.*
> Margot: *Ja, I'm writing what all the houses have. They've got lots of things. See here* (Points to the page she is working on).
> Kathy: *Oh. If it's got lots of things then it must be a big house.*
> Margot: *Ja it is, 'cos we need a big house. So we have to find a house with lots of things, for all of us.* (Continues writing).
> Kathy: *What does this say*? (Pointing to a 'word' on the sheet of paper).
> Margot: *It says that there is a double bedroom on top.*
> Sara: *And this Margot ?* (pointing to another 'word', leaning on her shoulder).
> Margot: *That says, mooooooove Sara, I can't write properly. It says that you can only have two cars in the front.*

Kathy also invokes stronger framing when the conversation turns to money and the way it works. This in fact is the most explicitly pedagogical interlude because Kathy not only orients Margot's attention to particular practices concerning money, she also communicates criteria and privileged practices i.e the 'correct' way to go about buying a house. In this extract Kathy is consciously developing Margot's 'navigational capacities' in relation to being a future home owner.

> Kathy: *You've got a line here Margot. What is that line for?*
> Margot: *It's for the price.*
> Kathy: *Oh.*
> Margot: *Ja. You have to put the price on, so that people can know what they much pay. Like in the paper Kathy.*
> Kathy: *Oh ja.*
> Margot: *People mustn't just pay any price Kathy. They have to pay the right price hey. It's like they have to go and get the money and pay the right price.*

Kathy: *Where do they get the money from Margot?*
Margot: *They get the money from the bank. They go and ask the bank and then they get the money, and then they pay it to the people.*
Kathy: *Does the bank just give them money Margot?*
Margot: *Ja. No problem. They go with they card, and they get the money.*
Oliver: *No. That's too much money for the card.*
Margot: *No it's not.*
Oliver: *Yes it is.*
Margot: *No it's not too much money. You can get money with your card.*
Oliver: *No you can't. Hey Kathy?*
Kathy: *Yes. I think that you have to go inside the bank if you want a lot of money Margot.*
Margot: *My mummy gets a lot of money from her card.*
Kathy: *Yes, she does sometimes. But a house costs such a lot of money that you have to go and specially get it.*
Margot: *Why Kathy?*
Kathy: *Because the money goes to the other person in a special way. We don't give the person the money like we do in the shops.*
Margot: *Oh.*

Up to this point, the two girls are working with a strong reality principle around buying a house but at this point, there is a dramatic shift into fantasy play as their imaginations take flight. Both girls take immense pleasure in using the idea of buying a house as a springboard for their fanciful desires and aspirations. Their creativity is praised and encouraged and it becomes a source of amusement for the whole family.

Kathy: *Wow. That is an expensive house Margot. I wish we could buy this house. It looks like you are writing such a lot, it must be a wonderful house.*
Margot: *Ja, it's a wonderful house. It's got so many things. It's got a sauna, and a tennis court, and a vegetable garden, and so much bedrooms.*
Sara: *How much bedrooms does it say?*
Margot: *It says 27 bedrooms.*
Sara: *27 bedrooms! (She and Margot start laughing). 27 bedrooms!*
Margot: *Ja. There's one for me and one for you and one for mummy and one for Ollie, and one for Libby, and one for Timmy, and one for the cats, and one for the rabbit, and one for Kathy.*
Sara: *And one for everyone!!*
Margot: *Ja, and there's also a bathroom for everyone.*
Sara: *Yes, a bathroom for everyone.*
Margot: *We all have to have a bathroom, even the cats!! (Laughs).*
Sara: *Yes, (laughing), they have to have a bathroom otherwise they can't clean themselves.*
Kathy: *Why?*
Margot: *'Cos they need to see in the mirror. (Laughs).*
Sara: *Yes if they don't look in the mirror, they can't do it.*
Margot: *Yes, they need to look in case their fur goes sqwonk, like this (shows with her own hair, she and Sara laughing all the time).*
Kathy: *What does it say on your paper?*
Margot: *It says that they fur will go sqwonk if they don't have a mirror in they bathroom!! (Laughing all the while). They fur will go sqwonk and then they can't go out.*

In this literacy event, classification and framing are much, much weaker than in the case studies of Dineo and Puleng. There is an invisible pedagogy operating, but the question is: what is the object of the pedagogy? It seems to us that the object of activity is buying a house not reading as such. Even though Margot and Sara are clearly novice readers and writers, reading is such a taken for granted aspect of all activity in this household that the activity is not marked by Kathy as an explicit reading activity at all. She does however mark the writing activity quite explicitly. However, both Margot and Sara externalise practices they have been exposed to in relation to reading both at home and at school as well as IRF (initiate-response-feedback) questioning patterns of school. The notable absence of any messages from Kathy about 'right' or 'correct' ways of reading communicates to Margot and Sara that this genre of text can be read in many ways, there is no specific order of reading the advertisements. In this textual practice, the reading pathways are open, and thus the reader's attention can be paid to different textual features - the images, the logos, the price - at different times.

The multimodal literacy event in this family illustrates par excellence Appadurai's concept of the capacity to aspire as it is enacted in everyday family life. In its orientation towards consumer practices, the 'norms and standards' of buying a house, the talk around the text is full of 'metaphors, justifications, narratives and pathways through which bundles of goods and services are actually tied to wider social scenes and contexts' (Appadurai 2002, p.7). Implicit in these conversations are more abstract norms and beliefs about the 'right' way to live: to have big houses with gardens and pools, to treat pets like people, to have credit cards and bank accounts, to have leisure time to play. Thus what Margot and the other children learn from this fluid, fluent and wide ranging conversation with adult members of the culture, is how to get access to and navigate the world of goods and services, the steps – textual, financial, cultural - to becoming a member of the ruling class. At the same time we must not lose sight of the fact that Margot is also learning how to become part of the literacy club, how to decode, interpret and transform multi-semiotic texts for her own interests and purposes. There is a huge element of pleasure and play in this encounter – literacy is as much about playing games and inventing worlds as it is about getting information about how to function in the 'real' world.

Concluding remarks

We have called our paper 'An eye on the text and an eye on the future' to signal how the 'stuff' of literacy is used by adults in families to teach children both the forms and shapes of literacy, as well as to develop particular orientations towards the future. In each case study, we have tried to demonstrate how the practice of literacy is not neutral but imbued with values, aspirations and attitudes around what textual practices count, for whom, and for what ends. In their relation to literacy learning, adults draw on their own histories of literacy, culture, knowledge and schooling. These histories are different: for Dineo's parents, learning literacy is associated with forms of magic and religious revelation and a particular kind of oral performance. For Puleng's grandmother, literacy is tied to oral storytelling practices which have been part of her history for generations. For Margot and her aunt, literacy is deeply embedded in family life, a natural activity, like eating or playing or sleeping. In all these homes, the 'stuff' of literacy is never one thing: the participants shift from looking at and talking about images to performing the written texts aloud, to producing forms of emergent

writing, to telling ancient stories in African languages and in English. These practices are fundamentally multimodal and draw on a range of representational resources available to the participants. These resources are not static: they are socially produced and are part of histories of culturally and historically situated communicative practices which have been developed and transformed through the participants' ongoing interaction with materiality and the shaping of culture. There are examples in these case studies of how the adults and children actively work with historically established conventions in relation to particular ideas of what it means to become literate, but in doing so, reshape these conventions. These transformations occur in different degrees and at different points in the process. They are related to the constraints and possibilities of the resources available in the environment, the interests of each individual sign-maker in relation to the communicative purpose, and the extent to which the sign-maker has a deep knowledge of the practice (Kress 2003).

The ideological nature of literacy practices is also apparent in how adult members of the culture use literacy to shape social relations and forms of identity (Street 1993). Our study has shown how each family member uses the practice of literacy to develop each girl child's navigational capacities in relation to possible futures. These capacities vary according to the kinds of access each family has to the nodes and pathways of power and resources. Appadurai (2002) has noted that the capacity to aspire is not evenly distributed in any society. The better off you are, in terms of power, dignity and resources, the more likely you are to be conscious of the links between more and less immediate objects of aspiration. This consciousness comes about because the better off are more 'supple' at navigational capacities through constant practice and concrete experiences. The poor, however, have fewer opportunities for practice. As a result, they have a 'thinner, weaker sense of the pathways from concrete wants to their realization' (Appadurai: 8). In our case studies, we see this at work in the differences between Dineo, Puleng and Margot's family situations. Dineo's mother and father's aspirations for their daughter take the form of 'being positive', praying and supporting her literacy development. For them, the path to 'worldliness' lies in forms of multilingualism and multiculturalism, giving her access to different languages and literacies, especially English, so that she can move out of her desperate situation into a 'white school' in town. Exactly how Dineo achieves this goal is uncertain because the desperate material conditions in which she lives make it very hard for her to do this. However, the fact that she lives on the borders of the city (as distinct from the rural areas) and is a high achiever in school gives her access to possible scholarships and resources which could help her to realize her potential. But there is no sure road to Dineo's future and there are thousands of children in similar (and worse) situations. For Puleng and Margot, their pathways to realizing their potential are more assured because their families have multiple resources and are more practised in navigating these nodes and pathways. For Puleng, her navigational capacities include knowing how to look after herself in the face of potential threats and dangers (like being devoured by cannibals), knowing at least four South African languages, having a strong connection to family roots and oral traditions and having a good sense of *ubuntu*. At the age of six, Margot already has a highly developed understanding of what it means to read and interpret images and text, as well as how to produce your own texts in the language of power, English. She is beginning to learn how to be a successful consumer in the age of global consumerism.

These three girls all live in or near the city of Johannesburg, have families who care about them, and are all doing well at school. But they clearly do not have the same life chances. It is ten years since South Africa achieved freedom and democracy. But for Dineo and her family, living on the edges of poverty, what is the meaning of freedom when there is no food in the house? We wonder how long it will take for the Dineos of South Africa to have a chance to fulfill their dreams, to know what it means to be free.

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Family literacy practices in Qanda

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Abstract

This paper examines the family literacy practices of ten adult participants in Adult Basic Education (ABE) classes in rural KwaZulu-Natal. It shows how women engaged in varied literacy practices in their homes, and describes practices, such as story telling, and reading to children. It looks at the benefits of participating in an ABE programme, which included personal empowerment, enhanced self-image, and the acquisition of literacy life skills that are crucial to the health and well being of their families. Because of ABE classes these women were able to engage with their children in school related literacy activities. The extent to which the participants and their children supported each other in their literacy development was dependent on their levels of literacy.

Introduction

Families as a context for learning are vehicles for the transmission of education in society (Alexandra and Clyne, 1995). Education starts from the family in the sense that the family interaction is intimate and intense, and includes ongoing activities that can support literacy more than any other type of institution. This presentation focuses on the practices of family literacy. It focuses on the influence of the Tembaletu Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET) programme on family literacy practices as reported by the women interviewed for the study who participate in the programme. The aim of this presentation is to establish how the participants in the research used literacy skills in their homes, their attitude to family literacy as well as the attitude they have about their own learning.

Why is it important to encourage family literacy practices?

There is not much information on people's literacy practices or about the influence on them of ABE programmes, especially in the South African context. The South African state education system does not promote family literacy. This is despite the fact that the success of participants at school depends on educational level of the mothers and caregivers (Desmond 2001).

Comparison of literacy practices between Hispanic American and black South African low-income families

Hispanic low-income families in America	Black low-income families in South Africa
• Government funded support • Private and non-governmental foundations fund programmes. • Mothers have high regard for their children's education. Mothers use rich culture, knowledge and context of oral literacy such as story telling.	• No government support. • Few non-governmental and private structures. • Mothers have high regard for their children's education. They use rich culture, knowledge and context of oral literacy such as story telling.

Desmond (2001)

Comment

Mothers from both types of families have high regard for their children's education. The strategies are, however, different because of entrenched habits, perceptions and funding. Research shows that, although low-income mothers have little education they have great commitment and willingness to help children succeed at school.

Attitudes towards literacy practices and activities at home in Hispanic USA community and South African low-income families.

There are clear similarities in the ways in which American and the South African families implement family literacy.

Hispanic low-income families in America	Black low-income families in South Africa
• Emphasise letter naming and sound correspondence • Use low level of print, employ simple language at the clause and phrase level, • Take children to libraries less than middle-income families, and • Use entrenched cultural habits that enhance schooling. Research also shows that mothers who are "poor" readers emphasise correct performance rather than enjoyment, fun, and comfortable literacy. (Mikulecky 1995)	• Emphasise vowels and syllables and how to pronounce them, sequencing and interpreting pictures. • Cover pictures to train children to memorise them. • Some mothers use homemade books with pictures from magazines to teach their children. There are no libraries in remote rural areas in South Africa. Practice naming body parts such as head, eyes, and stomach during bath time. (Desmond, 2001)

Although mothers from American and South African families are both poor, the Hispanic families enjoy resources such as libraries (Mikulecky 1995) that the black South African families do not enjoy. However, the South African mothers included in Desmond's study (Desmond, 2001) utilized home made print material to enhance literacy in their homes.

Findings on the influence of ABE programme on participant's practices

In this study, the researcher visited families in the Qanda area, which is about an hour's drive from Pietermaritzburg. Participants were women who were enrolled in ABET classes run in the area by Tembaletu, a community education centre in Pietermratizburg. The information given below is from women who agreed to be part of this study. Ms Mnguni said that she never assisted her children because of ignorance. She thought children should be taught by teachers at school.

> *"Our mothers did not help us when we were at school. Now I realize my mother was supposed to help me with my home work."*

Ms Duma with her daughter and her baby during home work session

Ms Duma's daughter was anxious of her mother's directive attitude. The child's attitude resembles that of a relationship between a teacher and student where the teacher has authority and is ready to scold the child if she says something wrong. The child clearly does not view this session as fun but the one with the possibility of scolding or spanking.
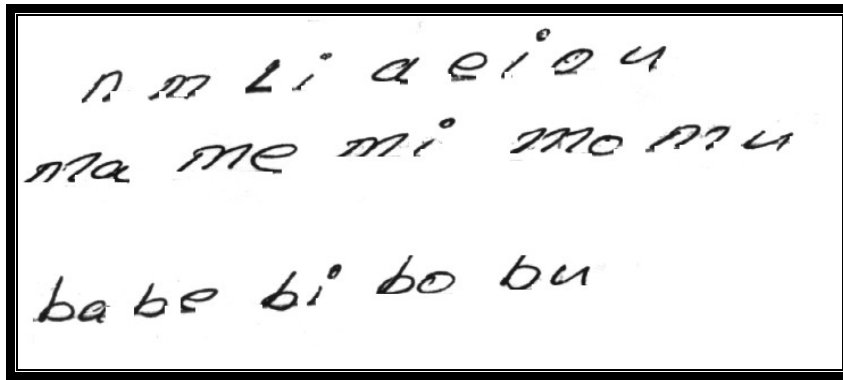
Duma's own hand writing during a vowel learning session

Ms Mnguni reading old copies of Learn with Echo

Mrs Mnguni keeps old copies of *Learn with Echo* (a newspaper written for adults with limited literacy skills) bound with a brown soft cover. They are well kept and have no sign of dirt or writing on them. Mrs Mnguni values the education she receives from the ABE programme by showing how she has learnt to read well, with little difficulty in pronunciation. She enjoys her independence in being able to read newspapers such as *The Witness, Ilanga*, and magazines such as *Bona*. *"I used to look at pictures in magazines and books but now I am able to read them"*. She is mostly interested in the English media because they help to improve her English. She reads alone and then tells the story she has read to her children. Her husband sometimes asks her about the content of the stories she reads. That challenges her to read carefully and with understanding.

Ms Ngcobo's signature - the evidence of learning is in application!

For Ms Zandile Ngcobo, the word "pen" refers to a pencil, and "ballpoint" to any pen that uses ink. She competes in knowledge of English vocabulary with her school going children. They help one another with home work should the need arise. She says:

> *"One of my weaknesses is getting the spelling right. I am 37 years old because I was born on 18 September 1966, now I can sign my name".*

Sample of Ms Ngcobo's signature

Ms Ngcobo enjoys reading Learn with Echo, and books from ABET classes. For her, Learn with Echo is a very educational and informative educational publication. She is now reading English with understanding. The evidence of this is that she made her own "dictionary" from a 72-page jotter book in which she has written English words that she has learnt and their meanings. She is now in the middle of her second dictionary. Her dictionary is a well used book as she returns to it to check her retention of the new words. Below is an example of a page of this dictionary.

Sample page of Ms Ndlovu's dictionary

This scan suggests that Ms Ndlovu views her education as a door to employment. The top paragraph seems to be a combination of the conclusion and the title (application for admission) of an application letter. It is interesting that she wrote the colours *navy beige* in the middle of the terms for letter writing. The scan also bears evidence that she has been reading about HIV/ AIDS. She has evidently taken keen interest in understanding terms such as "sexually transmitted diseases". There is even a Zulu explanation to the term, which suggests that she takes HIV/ AIDS understanding seriously. There are spelling mistakes or grammar mistakes in her dictionary, which attest to the genuine independence of this as her own learning tool, and not a checked and supervised exercise. For example, she wrote: *I very happy if my application letter will be successful* instead of I <u>am</u> very happy if my application letter is successful. A spelling error is in the Zulu *ezithelelanayo.* Instead of *sexually transmitted disease = izifo zoca<u>nsi</u> ezithelelanayo.*

Conclusion

In the homes of adults living in Qanda and participating in ABE classes, family literacy practices in the home are not highly structured, and there is no time set aside for practices such as homework sessions or bedtime story reading.

However, these adults had gained skills that enabled them to manage some literacy related activities independently, and they engaged in literacy in their families in one way or another. In addition, they maintained that what they learnt in classes had increased their awareness of health issues and healthy living, since they are now able to determine whether foodstuff has reached the end of its shelf life or not, and they can read about HIV and healthy living. According to them, in classes they have been helped to know their rights, and to manage their lives better. They also believed that the classes had instilled a culture of reading in them.

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Promoting literacy in Early Childhood Development communities, Grahamstown

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Abstract

The Centre for Social Development (CSD) in Grahamstown has adopted a community development approach to early childhood education, believing in the old saying that "It takes a village to raise a child". For a number of years now, the CSD has concentrated not only on building early childhood development (ECD) capacity in practitioners and promoting ECD centres, but also on building comprehensive relationships with the communities of the areas in which it operates.

Alongside an initiative such as the Parent-as-Activist Programme, the CSD is currently running an Education Training and Development Practices Sector Education Training Authority (ETDP SETA) Learnership for Development Practitioners, which involves 30 community facilitators from six areas. Since the CSD is functioning both as service provider and employer, the decision was taken to base these learners at ECD Centres for the practical component of their learnership. Their objective is to support and extend the work of the ECD learning site into the community. To this end, their Electives are all related to ECD, and one is the Unit Standard entitled "Involving family members in ECD". Within this Elective, there will be a strong focus on family literacy and numeracy, supported by funding for books from Biblionef. In this way, the aim is to promote literacy in both young children and adult members of the community.

Introduction to the work of the CSD

The Centre for Social Development (CSD), based in Grahamstown in the Eastern Cape, was established in August 1981 as an outreach arm of Rhodes University. It currently functions as a self-funding institute of the University. In addition to the administration of bursaries at the tertiary level, a number of projects were established in the townships ranging from pre-schools to service centres for the elderly. During the 1990's, a strong focus on early childhood development, or ECD, was developed and when the bursary division split off in 2000, this evolved into a broader focus on community development. In its search for sustainable models of community development, the CSD then focused on children from a **holistic** perspective and began working with the family unit and the surrounding communities.

Description of CSD model

Recognising that the preschool centres had the potential for being a community facility and a centre for wider social and cultural needs, the CSD began to develop a model that used early childhood education as an entry point or springboard for the development of a Community Development Centre which brought the whole school community together. In referring to ECD communities or school communities, we refer to all the stakeholders or persons involved or affected by the education initiative, i.e. the children, the practitioners, supervisors, School Governing Bodies, parents, family members, and members of the surrounding community.

From its journey, the CSD simultaneously learned the value of the community

development approach to early childhood, and the gaps that existed in the training of practitioners in early childhood development. The exercise highlighted the need for an integrated, developmental approach to the training of early childhood development practitioners. It further highlighted the need for community development practitioners (facilitators) to work **in collaboration** with ECD practitioners so that the families and communities are assisted towards the improved social well-being conducive to early childhood development. We view early childhood from a social development paradigm rather than through an education lens. Consequently, the CSD has embarked on an approach which integrates the training of ECD practitioners and community development practitioners, as well as placing community development practitioners at ECD centres, so that their combined efforts will contribute to the improved well-being of children, their families and communities. The CSD firmly believes that the development of children, beginning with early childhood, cannot take place in isolation of their families and communities. This approach is in stark contrast with, and has to combat the effects of, the education policies of the apartheid era, which focussed on education as separate from the child's community and intentionally excluded the family and respective community of the child from the "education" process. Even current government policy on ECD, as contained in the 2001 Education White Paper, does not take advantage of the possibilities of better linking between early childhood and parental services, and between ABET and ECD.

Family literacy and the development practice learnerships

The promotion of family literacy, in our instance, is done within the framework of development practice teaching.

In September 2004, the CSD was awarded a Level 1 Learnership in Development Practice for 30 students by the ETDP SETA, the first of its kind in the country. These students are drawn from eight different communities in six areas in and around Grahamstown, as it is the policy of the CSD to work within a 100km radius of Grahamstown when there is a practical support component involved. Other towns represented are Port Alfred, Kenton-on-Sea, Bathurst, Adelaide and Fort Beaufort, in which CSD works with a mix of rural and more urban communities. In all instances, though, these communities and the relevant ECD centres or schools are very under-resourced with regard to books and reading matter.

Since the CSD is functioning as both the Service Provider and the Employer for this Learnership, the decision was taken to base these learners at ECD centres for the practical component of their learnership.

We approached the supervisors and School Governing Bodies of ECD centres that we already work with, to "host" these students on our behalf for a minimum of a year, until the Level 1 learnership is completed. The community development practitioners are encouraged to work closely with the education practitioners, the supervisors and the School Governing Bodies. In describing how the education development practitioners and the community development practitioners work together, we like to use the image of two circles of people, standing back to back, but with arms interlinked. Those in the circle looking inwards are the education practitioners focussing on the needs and development of the children in the classroom. Those in the

circle looking outwards, although linked to the education practitioners, are looking towards influencing the **context** of the children through involvement with families and community members. The activities of the community development practitioners are governed by the terms of the Learnership Agreements, requirements of the General Education and Training Certificate, and a Memorandum of Agreement between the CSD, the practitioners and the ECD sites.

The students for this Learnership were selected on the basis of prior involvement in their communities on a voluntary basis, and also involvement in previous capacity-building initiatives of the CSD. We believe that building relationships is a cornerstone of community development work, and that our students would be more successful if they had already walked some way down this road. They are not all young people – they range from being in their mid-twenties to around 50 years of age.

The Core Unit Standards for this qualification are all related to Development Practice, which means that these practitioners or students are working from within a framework of the theories of development, participatory approaches, facilitation of group learning events, community needs surveys, and so on, which focus their understanding of the context in which they work.

When it came to the Elective Unit Standards, for obvious reasons it was decided to link these as far as possible to early childhood development. One of the chosen electives is entitled "Involving family members in ECD" and within this, there has been a strong focus on family literacy and numeracy. Training for the students has included elements of the Family Maths Science and Literacy approach, which involves family participation in children's education, as well as elements of the Family Literacy Project.

Practical implementation and the Biblionef partnership

In an attempt to support the implementation of this focus on the ground, the CSD approached Biblionef for a donation of books to kick-start the efforts of the students. Funds were raised by Biblionef to enable a donation of a book trunk with approximately 60 – 70 books and some educational aids, to each of the sites where the students are attached. A handing-over ceremony and training took place in Grahamstown in August, combined with a book launch for the children's HIV/AIDS awareness book "Brenda has a dragon in her blood", with various children's organisations and community structures represented.

The Development Practice students have since taken the book trunks to their respective ECD sites, and begun to implement initiatives related to it. These students have gradually been building their professional practitioner status and in under-resourced communities such as the ones they work in, the book trunks have added weight to parents' and the community's perception of them as being serious about enhancing their children's education and development opportunities. The book trunks also give added impetus to their efforts to draw parents and family members into the children's education process; it gives them a kind of handle on which to hang their outreach activities.

The role of what has become known as the "Brenda" book has been an interesting one. The book has linked well with one of the students' other electives, which is about raising awareness and education around HIV/AIDS. It has helped the students to give information about the issue per se, but it has also showed how the book as a medium can be a powerful tool in sharing experiences and information, and play an educational/awareness-raising role. In addition, it has given them a "way in", or an entry point, from which to launch the promotional books and reading more widely with parents and teachers.

Most of the students have chosen to start at the ECD sites with reading stories to the children, making the teachers and the children aware of the available books, and encouraging them to interact with the books. Some of them are planning to have regular weekly story hours at their homes in the community during the afternoons.

At one of the primary schools involved, in Bathurst, the books from the trunk have been loaned to Grade 6 pupils to take home, and they then meet at the Community Library once a week to talk about and discuss the books that they have read. Alarmingly, but not unsurprisingly, the levels of literacy and reading capabilities of these learners have been found to be sadly lacking and impeding progress. It seems to reinforce the notion that reading is poorly taught and the promotion of a love of reading in schools is lacking.

In two particular areas, the students have chosen to focus on the "Brenda" book and are utilising it in different settings, for example clinics.

Some of the students have invited parents and SGBs to special meetings where they have showed them the book trunks, and the latter responded with enthusiasm on behalf of the children, but the real challenge of drawing the parents and family members into the literacy process still lies ahead.

Workshops with parents around the value and enjoyment of books and shared reading, will be required as part of the Assessment process of the community development practitioners, and they will be evaluated on the organisation and presentation of these. What is also proposed is the holding of regular interactive reading sessions by the community development practitioners, at the schools, with parents and children.

Conclusion

To come back to the context in which this family literacy initiative is functioning. These Development Practice students are addressing a range of issues with parents, family and community members, from the basis of an ECD site or school: the value and importance of reading and shared literacy is one of them. This points to an approach to family literacy which does not see itself as an initiative in isolation, but embedded in a process that links early childhood development with the development of whole communities. The promotion of family literacy is one aspect of this process.

In effect, the relevant communities are beginning to see the community development practitioners as change agents, or even activists, and in the process are being drawn into the ECD sites and schools. Coupled with the Parent-as-Activist Programme, also

run by the CSD, and an inherent desire to see their children prosper, it is beginning to create a mind-shift that acknowledges children's development and education as not being something that happens in isolation, but as part of a greater developmental process that involves the whole family and community.

Thank you for the opportunity to share with you some of the work that we do.

Starting Early: First Words in Print Project

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Abstract

Bantu Education of apartheid South Africa has left countless black families with few reading and writing skills, particularly in rural and poor households. For them not much has changed. The school curriculum of yesteryear is still used in some schools in rural areas. Teachers who are products of Bantu Education pass their teaching on to this generation and so continue the cycle. Children are not introduced to libraries and reading early enough, if there are any libraries in their areas. Schools still do not have libraries and teachers are not equipped to start school libraries. If there are libraries, the collection is likely to be grey and does not reflect the needs of the community. In schools where there are libraries, the only books available are textbooks and children and teachers only go to the library to study or to complete a certain task. They have no story books for children or any lessons for stimulating reading for fun. For parents of these children, a library is a no-go area and sharing books as a family is unheard of.

For decades the black population in South Africa was not allowed to access essential services that were available to other racial groups. Libraries are no exception and they are still very intimidating to many people. My sixty year old mother and almost all her peers still regards a library as a place for those who want to get an education, as opposed to a Mrs Van der Merwe who knows that whatever she needs she will get at her local library. The library in the small community of a small town in the Northern Cape where I grew up is in its second year of existence and no one has ever told the community what is available and of what use the library is to them. When some community members do eventually visit the library, the librarian's selection is of no use to them. In most libraries, especially rural and small town libraries, library assistants run the library and most of them are not readers themselves. The only concern for the librarian is that people not visiting her library will impact on her collection being reduced by the provincial library services! This is not unique to my community library.

With the First Words in Print (FWP) project we hope to redress the legacy of apartheid and instill a love and value of reading for pleasure into these communities. The First Words in Print project started as a result of research that showed that children who start reading at an early age in their own languages do better academically and otherwise than those who don't, and also to address the unavailability of literature aimed at 0-6 year olds in South Africa. Unfortunately in South Africa black people have not been exposed to books written in their own languages, except for text books, and children are introduced to books only at primary school level as a learning tool. Until recently libraries have been built in townships, and rural areas have been left out.

First Words in Print is an unusual project for South Africa, in that it focuses on the age group 0-6 years, the most important years of the child's development, as well as

their families. We are into our fifth year of existence and have distributed more than 40 000 packs of books written in eight languages of the country to children and their families in seven provinces, mostly in rural areas. We also introduce children's caregivers and parents to reading for pleasure and having their children read for fun, as well as appreciating their own languages. We believe that by empowering them they will initiate similar projects and use their skills to teach their families and communities.

A baseline study was conducted in four pilot areas of the Western and Eastern Cape, the Free State and Mpumalanga and the report findings showed that children are not stimulated to read as they don't have reading role models in their parents and no books are available in their households. First Words in Print is more than a children's literacy project. We don't just distribute books and leave afterwards. We run workshops for parents and caregivers, as well as members of the community who are active in community affairs, on how to introduce literacy and stimulating reading for fun before books are distributed. A video and pamphlet were developed and used as a basis for raising awareness around these issues.

Most of the people who receive these books have never been inside a library or bookshop and are not aware of the value of reading. Independent researchers follow these families after they have received books to assess the extent to which our books have been of value to their literacy development. Our ultimate goal is for each of these families to own twelve books (distributed by us), and we hope that by then reading for pleasure will be a natural pastime to them and they will be regulars in libraries. We have seen positive results and heard comments from these families that show that we are doing something right and that they have been waiting for something like this for years. Research findings are available in our office.

Most children's books in South Africa are written in English and Afrikaans, with most of the English ones imported. Children in disadvantaged communities have never seen themselves reflected in books they were reading, even when they are translated into their home languages. Neither they nor the environment they live in are ever reflected in stories and thus they have a perception that their languages are not important. First Words in Print books are challenging those stereotypes and we hope to get publishers to realize that there is a market for books in indigenous languages in South Africa.

Take for example MaKhanyile, a single mother of two in rural KwaZulu-Natal whom we interviewed during our monitoring visit in the area. She only has a primary school education and can only read in isiZulu. Her two little children are both in primary school and had no books to read for pleasure until they received the First Words in Print book packs. She claimed that her confidence as a mother has been restored since she can enjoy reading the only books they have owned besides church hymnals and her children's text books as a family, in isiZulu.

But of course MaKhanyile and all other people like her in South Africa don't have a strong enough voice to convince publishers and writers that they are a market for books written in indigenous South African languages. They are poor and they cannot afford to buy books. They are unfortunately not regarded as a buying force. Rich and middle class black people, the perceived buying force, would not dare be seen reading a book in Tswana or Xhosa. They consider it backwards and of no benefit to them and

their children in future. For years they have believed what the previous regime was telling them, that their languages are of no importance and they pass this perception on to their children. It is unfortunately on this kind of perception that some publishers and writers base their assumption that there is no market for African languages in publishing. Our research though has shown that the community's impoverished social status does not deter them from enjoying books and reading. In fact, as one parent said in KwaZulu-Natal, it brings them together to revive the story telling times they used to have. The communities show determination to make literacy projects work to their advantage. What we notice during our monitoring visits is that the content of the books is meaningful to them and gives them immense pleasure. Clearly more books are needed in African languages for African children.

Our biggest challenge is with parents, caregivers and teachers who still think that reading in English is the only way for children to be literate or to enjoy books. It is the responsibility of all of us in the book industry, to create an awareness of the impact that reading can bring in one's life, from children to adults. If communities like the ones visited by the FWIP project can see and cherish the value of books and reading despite their circumstances, we can all be able to change the face of South Africa and have a reading nation!

How children develop language and literacy

Mirna Lawrence

COUNT

Abstract

COUNT's Family Maths, Science, Literacy and Life (FMSLL) skills programme is a comprehensive programme that stimulates all areas of children's cognitive development. The vehicle for such development is through activities based on fundamental and universal and maths, science, literacy and life skills knowledge strands that are also reflected in the Revised National Curriculum Standards. The FMSLL programme recognizes the essential role that language plays in all areas of development. To facilitate the language and literacy development of children, from which all other learning emanates, COUNT has developed a programme in which the emphasis on encouraging language through maths, science, literacy and life skills is paramount. To further explain the role of language and literacy in learning, COUNT has developed the following paper the principles of which guide the literacy and other activities used in our workshops.

The unborn baby

Hearing sounds

Before scientists had modern equipment to see how a baby lives in the womb, it was thought that babies were born without any experience of touch, sight or sound. It was thought that the developing baby knew only darkness and silence. Thanks to modern technology we now know that in fact most babies, those who have developed without hearing or sight difficulties, are aware of their surroundings from early on, long before birth. We know today that a baby can hear the mother's voice and the beating of her heart. Tests show that a baby is aware of the mother's stress through the changes to her breathing and her heart beat. We know today that what happens in the womb is important to the child's future learning.

Research has shown that a baby in the womb hears music, voices and other sounds, and reacts to these by kicking, turning or grimacing. For example, very loud noises that are close by, are unpleasant for an unborn child. So right from the beginning the baby is responding aurally (by hearing) to the world, and is beginning to experience which sounds are pleasant, and what the sounds mean. For example, if the mother's heart beats loudly and fast, the baby responds to the symptoms of stress.

This is the beginning of learning language and literacy; by hearing, listening and responding, the baby is learning about sound. The rhythm of the mother's walk, her heartbeat and her voice all prepare the baby for the rhythm of language.

Many women report that when they play music their unborn baby responds with kicks and punches. Scientists and educators now tell mothers to stimulate their baby's hearing and thinking by playing different kinds of music close to their tummies so that the unborn baby can hear it. Some scientists even suggest that playing some

Renaissance music to an unborn or newborn baby helps the baby to relax and to develop bigger brains by stimulating the alpha waves on the right side of the brain.

Mothers who have tried this report that their baby even has a preference for certain kinds of music, and that when the baby is born, s/he prefers that kind of music to listen to! For example, one mother said her baby kicked hardest to Bob Marley music and when the baby was born Bob Marley music relaxed her baby girl when she was crying. Another mother said that her unborn baby boy responded to The New World Symphony by Rachmaninoff, and that this music was still the child's favourite even when he was 7 years old!

Sight

Babies' eyesight is not at all well developed but the beginning of sight is there. From birth they are able to see light and dark; and very bright light is not experienced as pleasant. That is why doctors recommend that a pregnant mother should not expose her tummy to strong sunlight for long hours - it may cause eye damage to the child.

Touch

Pictures of babies in the womb show that they respond to pain by pulling up their legs, and suck their thumbs for comfort. Babies feel, hear and see long before they are born. In the beginning the baby is very tiny and floats around in the womb. But, as s/he grows bigger, and starts to kick and move her or his arms, s/he begins to feel the wall of the womb every time s/he kicks and punches. Towards the end of pregnancy the baby is so tightly fitted into the womb that every part of her/his body is in touch with the womb wall. When people stroke or prod from the outside the baby feels that too.

While all this stimulation is going on the child's brain is developing the important nerves (neurons) and connections in the brain (synapses). These are necessary for all learning, and especially for language and literacy learning, to happen successfully. From this we now know that right from the beginning a baby is experiencing and learning.

For this reason, doctors and educators tell pregnant women to sing to their baby and to play them music. They should also stroke the baby and tickle it through the tummy so that the baby can feel and respond to touch. Family members should be encouraged to 'talk' to the baby in the womb so s/he can hear their voices. Research shows that a newborn baby can recognize the mother's voice immediately after birth, because s/he has been hearing that voice throughout her or his life in the womb, albeit filtered through the fluid in the womb.

Language development

After birth

As we have seen, the building blocks for all learning, and especially language and literacy learning, are present in the womb. But once the baby has been born, development in these areas is rapid. Research shows that within 6 weeks of birth a newborn baby can distinguish the sound of its home language from other languages. That is amazing. It means that the baby recognises the cadence (the up and down sounds) and rhythm of its home language. It cannot understand the words or speak the language yet, but if different languages are heard, the baby will respond to her or his home language by moving her or his head, or turning towards the sound. Babies also listen for longer to the cadence of their home language than to a language that is 'foreign' to them.

Why babies cry

Many people believe that when a baby cries it is telling people that it is not happy in some way. While this is true for a baby that is a bit older, a newborn baby cries as a reaction to feelings and experiences (stimuli) like hunger, cold, discomfort and fear. It does not cry with the specific intention of communicating this to anyone; a baby cries because s/he is in pain of some kind. It is an instinctive response to discomfort, like saying 'ouch!' when we step on a pin. But, it is true that after a while the baby learns that when it cries, something happens, usually a loving adult appears and tries to make her or him feel better. In this way the baby learns that s/he can use crying to notify everyone that s/he needs help. After a while the baby learns how to manipulate the cry to send a specific message to the adult; many new mothers can tell if a cry is a cry of hunger, or a cry of discomfort, boredom, fear or a wet nappy. Very soon the baby uses crying not just as a reaction, but as a way of communicating. The more successful the baby is in getting an adult to respond lovingly, the more the baby will increasingly develop a sophisticated method of communication, which will in time lead to speaking.

This is the start of using vocalization (using one's voice) for language and communication.

A baby's brain growth

Stimulating a baby after birth is very important. For a long time it was believed that a baby's brain was born with all the brain nerves it would ever need already complete and prepared for learning. It was also believed that if those brain nerves were not fed (stimulated) with the necessary information they would close down and die (this is called the 'gate theory'). We now know that while all this is true, recent studies show that the baby's brain actually makes new nerve connections (called synapses), when it is stimulated. This tells us that while we must feed the **prepared nerves** with language and other stimulation, we can **grow more nerve receptors** by giving a baby the interesting activities that help to grow the areas of language, literacy and maths.

The truth is that the more we stimulate a baby's brain, the more successful that child is likely to be in language, maths and other learning. So, just as we have to give a baby the best food (nutrition) that we can afford so that s/he can grow big and strong, so too must we feed a baby with all the stimulation we can to grow her or his brain.

Mind food for successful language and literacy acquisition

How do we do this? Well, research shows that without knowing it, mothers and fathers, and other important adults in the baby's life, already do some of the right things.

For example, research has shown that a baby hears high sounds more easily than low sounds. That's is why a new baby will not usually jump or start when a loud sound is heard. For example, a new baby will not jump when there is a loud clap of thunder. But when the baby is a few weeks older it will react if there is a loud noise. (In fact, if a baby does not respond to loud noises by the time s/he is a few months old it would be wise to have her or his ears and hearing checked). It seems that most adults, especially new moms, know instinctively that a baby hears high sounds, and so they talk to the new baby in a much higher voice than they usually use. In this way the baby is able to listen and hear.

Another thing most adults do is to hold a baby very close, and to look deeply into her / his eyes when talking to her or him. This too is an instinctively correct way to relate to a new baby. A new baby cannot see very well, so one has to be close up for them to make out the shape of a face. Research also shows that when a mother holds her baby close, looks deeply into her or his eyes, and smiles and talks to the baby, that baby's brain grows new synapses at an astonishing rate. Remember though, that this only refers to loving contact; if you hold a baby close and yell at it or scowl or show any negativity there is no growth of connections at all. In fact if a baby or child is unhappy and shouted at there will be less learning taking place.

So, the first and most important thing to do to encourage language is to talk and sing to a baby. Many people say, 'but what should I talk about? After all, the baby can't understand me.' Of course they are correct, but, what is happening is that when we talk to a baby we are laying down the patterns of speech long before s/he can understand what is being said. Even though a baby cannot speak or understand, s/he is learning nonetheless. Research shows that a child learns 75% of what it needs to know in the first 5 years of life. Everything after that is merely building on what is already known. After that, the brain slows down and nerve paths that have not been stimulated close down (remember the gate theory?). But from 0 to 5 the baby is taking in everything all of the time, and language and literacy are an important part of that learning.

We need to read to our babies. A baby will not mind what is read. He or she just likes the sound of our voice and the closeness of our body. We can read from the bible, or from a magazine or from a newspaper, or books. The interest of the reader will be communicated to the baby and s/he will listen and learn. And by introducing the baby to reading at such a young age s/he will learn that reading is important. In this way we will have put the child firmly on the path to being literate. We need to make our

homes print rich; our babies and children need see us reading for pleasure too. Reading a magazine or a book, instead of sitting in front of the TV, is a good way to model the importance of the written word.

When a baby is old enough to see more clearly, it is time to show her or him books that are more suitable for a young child. If it is difficult to buy picture books, we can look in magazines and make our own books. A baby or young child is not fussy. If one makes a book and reads or talks about it with love, the baby will be happy with it even if it is made of newspaper pictures, or our own drawings. And we don't need to worry about whether we can draw or not because a baby doesn't need works of art. One can draw shapes and colour them in, or dots or patterns of colour with lines and waves. Our babies will be interested in looking at whatever we can draw. One can also cut out pictures of animals from magazines and paste these onto paper to make an animal book. If we talk about animals, and say their names and imitate the sound the animal makes, it won't be long before a baby will try to say the names and the sounds of the animals too.

Happy talk time

In general, if there is any piece of advice to give it is **Talk, Talk** and **Talk** some more. But we must talk with love, and with a smile, with interest and warmth. When we talk to a baby we need to imagine that we are bathing the baby in words, and love.

One can even ask the baby what s/he thinks-even though one don't expect any kind of an answer! When the baby is older, and beginning to look around, s/he needs to be propped up at the table when we are cooking or doing housework. We can tell the baby what we are doing. For people who are busy this means that one can get work done and still spend quality time with the child.

When a baby first begins to talk s/he sounds like every other baby in the world. This is because all languages have the same basic root sounds on which different words are built. So all babies say 'lalalala' and 'mamama' and 'dadadada' and 'papapa' – and of course we all think that our child is a genius and is already clever enough to be calling us by our title of mommy or daddy. This kind of sound is called babbling (or lallation). This is the very beginning of speech. When a baby makes these sounds, we should make the sounds back to show how clever s/he is to be talking. We can then use the same sounds to make a similar word so the baby can hear how the real words sound. For example, if the baby says 'dadada' we can say 'Dadadada' back and then add 'Yes, your daddy is coming home soon,' (or whatever is appropriate to say).

Small children can get frustrated when an adult does not understand what they are trying to say. One needs to give the child a chance to work it out, and offer words that may be the one s/he is looking for, and then say the correct sentence back to the child. The child will watch our facial expressions and soon s/he will be trying to say the words the way that you have. One should show how excited one is that s/he is trying to speak.

Singing to the child, playing music and encouraging the child to make sounds with different objects will stimulate the child. We can offer loud and soft, high and low

sounds and tones, recite rhymes and sway to rhythms. Giving one's child pots and spoons to bang and make music with is not just a way to keep her or him busy, but is also a way to develop the sounds and rhythms necessary for speech.

Learning about sounds

When a baby is small the sounds s/he hears are general ones, like the sound of a cow or a cat or a car or the banging of spoon on a pot or the scraping of a spoon on a plate. When the child is little we can play guessing games where the child closes her / his eyes and listens to a sound and then names what object made the sound. Or the child can look at pictures of animals and talk about the sounds each animal makes (For example, on can say "A dog barks. It says bow-wow". Or, 'A cat mews, it says meow etc). But, when the child is older s/he beings to hear the differences between specific sounds and that is when we can play other sound games that deal with the phonics of words, and their syllabication (how they are divided up). For example, if one takes the child's name and together with the child clap to see how many syllables (parts) there are in the name, the child will learn to be aware of the ways in which sounds are stressed.(For example, A/ yan/ da has 3 syllables, so you would clap 3 times as you break up the word and the child will hear how the world is built and where the stresses lie). We can use many kinds of words for clapping.

Another game can be to ask what the first (or last or middle) sound heard in any given word is. For example, "What is the first sound you hear in the word 'dog'?" ("d"), or, "What is the last sound you hear in the word 'dog'?" ("g"). Or, "What is the middle sound you hear in the word 'dog'?" ("o"). We need to also give the child a chance to challenge us too.

Reading by myself

By the time the child is 3 years of age incidental reading is taking place. Young children can recognize a Coca Cola sign without knowing how to read. When one goes shopping with a young child, one can play a game to see how many logos and signs s/he can read. 'Incidental reading' means that the child is beginning to recognize that pictures and letters mean something, without being taught that they have meaning. It is an association made over time, through exposure to and experience with, signs and words. For example, a child will soon realise that a traffic sign says "STOP', because her or his mother stops every time the sign appears. It is important to help this kind of identification along. We can do that by writing simple words clearly and then placing them up at home. Word's like 'wall' or 'door' or 'light' or 'toys' can be placed on or near the object they name. It is important to 'read' the words with the child, then the child can 'read' it again by her or himself. (The child will be proud to be able to 'read' the words on her or his own). To extend the game one can ask if the child can see other examples of those letters somewhere else in the room or home, or in a book etc.

Another way we can encourage incidental reading is to read out advertisements on TV or in the street, to read road signs and street names so that the child begins to make the connection that the markings (letters) mean something.

We must lead by example, by making our homes and Early Child Development centres print-rich, with signs, words and books available with which the child can engage. More importantly, we are important role models. One needs to let the child see that we like to read (rather than watching TV!). A good practice that some people have is to have a half hour each day when the parent and the child read, each on their own, sitting quietly near each other, but each engaged in their own book. Another must is to try to read a bedtime story to the child. By letting the child 'read' some parts we help the child to see that the marks on the page (letters and words) have meaning. And when the child holds a book and tries to 'read', we need to hug and applaud her or him (even if the book is upside down!) That way the child will learn that reading wins approval.

Clapping patterns and patterns with shape and colour are important. The way words are written, and the order in which words go on a page, is a pattern. So, children need to be able to remember a particular sequence of letters. The best way to encourage this is to play games with beads and small objects where the child is required to remember and remake a pattern. For example, you could set out 2 blue beads, 1 yellow bead and 3 red beads, and ask the child to try and copy this pattern. We should talk about the pattern with the child, then cover the pattern with a cloth, and ask the child to make the same pattern, always starting from the left and going from left to right horizontally. One can than check with the child that the patterns match. Clapping patterns are also useful. Clap different sequences and then let the child clap the pattern back. We can play games where the child hears differences between sounds and give directions and instructions for the child to follow. What a child will remember depends on age. On average a 3 year old will remember one instruction. A 4 to 5 year old will remember a 3-part instruction, for example, sit down, take off your shoes and close your eyes. A 6 year old will remember a 4-part instruction, etc). One can make this into a game by giving the child silly things to do, for example, 'clap your hands, then stamp your foot and hop backwards to me'. We must give the child a chance give instructions too that we must to carry out, too!

Whatever they do is right

At this stage there is no wrong or right in what a child does in her or his exploration of language and literacy. We can encourage the child to draw a picture and then ask the child what s/he wants written at the bottom of the page. We must write exactly what the child says. If a child begins to make squiggles to show writing ask the child to 'read' it to you. Some children may begin writing their names at this stage (at about 4 years of age) and by five most children are able to write their names, albeit it sometimes with back-to-front letters. If a child writes the letters back to front it is best not to correct her or him, but rather to write their name on the paper as a model, so that the child can get the letters in the correct place and direction. We need to praise everything that the child does, so that the child feels safe to try again.

We can help the child to make a book and write the story on each page and we can encourage the child to 'read' the story to the family. One can use pictures to encourage a child to look for similarities and differences in pictures and words in the newspaper, on packets and in books and magazines. Noticing small details is important for memory and word recognition.

The tools of the trade

Aside from all the above stimulation, a child needs to be able to see and hear clearly so as to be able to read, write and work with manipulatives, in other words, play with, examine, move and manipulate concrete objects, and so learn about them and from them. It is important to notice if there are barriers to learning. For example, can the child hear all ranges of sound? Sometimes small children get fluid in their ears and this makes hearing difficult. We need to check if a 'naughty' or 'disinterested' child is actually a child with short or long term hearing difficulties. One needs to check if the child can hear from wherever one is standing, and especially when s/he has her / his back towards one.

Being able to see clearly is another important tool that the child needs to be able to properly read and write. We need to check if the child holds a book too far or too near and to take note of how the child sits when drawing or writing. Questions to ask of oneself are: does s/he sit too near or too far. Or, does s/he turn her / head away from the middle of the page? Does the child cross the midline (in other words, look from one side of the page to the other in one movement), or does s/he move the book to the left or right side? Does the child angle her / his head to mask one eye?

Many children who can hear and see perfectly well still find it difficult to learn. These children may also have barriers to learning such as Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, or Attention Deficit Disorder. These difficulties should be attended to by a professional, such as a neurologist, occupational therapist, speech therapist and possibly a psychologist.

Working within the curriculum

It so happens that the curriculum for Grade R covers the necessary areas of language and literacy development of young children. For example, these are the language and literacy strands:

LO1 : Listening (listening to songs, rhymes, finger-plays, stories, word games, clapping games, animal and other sounds, phonic sounds, following instructions)

LO 2: Speaking (singing songs, saying rhymes, finger-play, sharing news, talking about many things, 'reading' from a book, talking about a story, giving instructions, saying what text should go under a drawing. Creating own stories. Let them change the end of a story they know. Let them say what they liked best or least about a story and why. Dramatising a story)

LO 3: Reading and viewing (looking at pictures and books and talking about what is seen and understood. Reading signs, recognizing letters, identifying individual words, reading sentences and full texts)

LO 4: Writing (drawing, scribbles, patterns, writing own name, copying words, writing)

LO 5: Thinking and reasoning (thinking about a story and explaining what happens when and why. Predicting what a story is about, giving opinions on the story, comprehension of a story, retelling the story in sequence).

LO 6: Language structure and use (correct sentence structure, using prepositions, tenses, and other grammatical structures correctly and appropriately. Self-correcting when errors of language structure and use are noted by self or others)

Subjects of interest

Children are curious about everything so there is no limit or end to what you can sing, talk, read, think and write about. Remember that young children do not concentrate for very long. A 2 year old will concentrate for a few minutes only. A three to four year old can concentrate for about 10 minutes and a 5 to 6 year old can concentrate for about 15 to 20 minutes. After that they need to move around and move to a new game and idea.

Some areas of interest are:

Myself
My family
Animals
My community
People who help me (nurses, doctors, fire fighters, garbage collectors etc)
My friends
Different people in my world
Food
My country
How I worship
Festivals and other day's to remember
Working with shape, size, number and colour
Fruit and flowers
Transport etc

Books for children

The most important parts of a book for children are the illustrations (pictures). Children like large, clear and colourful pictures and large print. Subject matter should be varied.

We need to remember that young children have small hands, so we must choose books that are easy for small hands to hold. Small hands find page turning difficult; so one needs to make sure that the paper is thick enough for a child to easily turn the page. We can talk about the illustration on the cover of the book, tell them the title of the story, as well as name of the author and illustrator. We can ask the child to predict what s/he thinks the story will be about. It is important for the child to see that one starts reading from the top of the page and from left to right in English and other

South African languages. Some other languages are written from right to left or top to bottom.

Because children love repetition they like to say the words that they know, and they enjoy being part of the story. Children also like hearing the same story over and over again. We need to choose books that reflect the child's own experience, but also give them books that extend their understanding and knowledge of the world (start with what is known and move to the unknown). One should choose books that are positive and life affirming and that encourage the child to identify emotionally as well as intellectually with the subject matter. Many people are careful to choose books that give positive values, especially about girls, women and people who are different in some way. We can encourage compassion, empathy, tolerance and respect in young children, through stories.

We can retell the story as a group, or pair, act out the story, make puppets and do a puppet show about the story, make up a song about the story. When reading, or telling a story, we can use drama and a dramatic voice and face and change the pace of our reading or story telling. We can also change the volume and pace of what we are reading or telling to make it more atmospheric and interesting. It is important that we make eye contact throughout the story and always have the page facing the child so that they can see the pictures and the text.

Finally...

Research shows that the earlier a child becomes familiar with and uses books the better s/he will do in formal education. Research also shows that that the interest of even one adult who is important in the child's life will make a big difference to that child's interest in, and success at, formal learning. So, it is our responsibility to see that our children get what they need, to develop their language and literacy skills. Books and stories help a child to understand her or his world and how and where s/he fits into it and the role s/he and the important adults play. Children also learn new and interesting facts from books.

Reading a book and asking questions afterwards will develop the following skills:
      Learning to think using language
      Thinking about how language is used
      Develop comprehension and insights
      Develop a bigger vocabulary
      Become familiar with the written word (print)
      Be better able to concentrate and think critically

During COUNT's Family Maths, Science, Literacy and Life skills literacy sessions, considerations of all of the above are taken. COUNT further more endorses the **DEAR** practice - of having unexpected and unplanned times when we, and our children, **D**rop **E**verything **A**nd **R**ead ...

Museums and Literacy: A Case Study

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Abstract

Museums are public institutions which hold tremendously valuable resources and are thus ideally placed to facilitate learning for both young and old. They are places of informal, self-directed and linear learning. Exhibitions and artefacts are the catalysts for learning. This paper will examine an initiative that was based at the South African Museum – an adult literacy programme that was attended by students of varying ages. In the programme the museum collections were used as a point of departure for enhancing literacy skills. The museum exhibits, behind-the-scenes visits and planetarium shows provided different points of entry for learning and the decoding of culture, traditions and the beliefs of students. The students were able to identify with the Museum's rich resources, which in many instances unlocked memories. In class discussions and oral histories informed and enlivened the objects that had been viewed. Several literacies are at play in museums – visual literacy, scientific literacy and computer literacy, hence the inclusion in the programme of visits to art galleries, other heritage sites and the observatory. Students were also able to acquire basic computer skills with regular sessions in the Museum's online learning centre, MindSPACE. Through this programmes people of different ages from different communities came together, enhanced their literacy skills and shared and validated their knowledge.

Introduction

Museums, as public institutions funded by the state, are well placed to facilitate and promote learning. In one way or another they are all centres of culture, knowledge and learning; they are meeting places for both people and ideas and places where knowledge is shared. Unlike formal educational institutions museums are open to all and do not have entry requirements.

Museums hold valuable resources, and this varies from museum to museum. In the South African Museum, where the literacy project that will be discussed in this presentation was based, the collections spanned the disciplines of earth, life and human sciences.

Museums are ideally placed to facilitate learning for young and old. Museums are visited by visitors of all ages, and exhibits can be viewed and interpreted by all visitors. In some instances museums have special areas for young visitors, such as the Discovery Room in the South African Museum. Children are encouraged to touch the specimens and artefacts in this area. Many museums also offer workshops for children that are often based on what is on display, for instance workshops on dinosaurs and sharks.

Museums are places of informal, self-directed learning. Learning does not take place in a formal, classroom based manner, and even if learners are given a museum based task to do, the learning experience is a rich one, filled with discovery.

Museum exhibitions are catalysts for learning as the objects on display as well as those that can be handled and looked at by the learners, are tangible and provide evidence of natural and cultural environments. This learning experience in which objects can be viewed and handled, can also be enhanced by relevant lectures, videos and published material, in so doing broadening the learning experience.

The adult literacy programme at the South African Museum was attended by students of varying ages. Museum collections were used as points of departure for enhancing literacy skills. Museum exhibits, behind-the scenes visits and planetarium shows provided different points of entry for learning and decoding of the culture, traditions and beliefs of students and Museum resources unlocked memories for students. Class discussions and oral histories informed and enlivened objects viewed.

Several literacies are at play in museums; visual literacy, scientific literacy and computer literacy. For instance, interpreting an object in relation to the label or viewing a painting requires a certain kind of visual literacy. Interactive displays often require technical and computer literacy. The labelling in a natural history museum requires assumes familiarity with the discourse of science.

Visits to art galleries, various heritage sites and the Royal Observatory made it possible for the students to gain exposure to various literacies. Students were able to acquire basic computer skills in MindSPACE – the Museum's online learning centre Through this initiative people of different ages from different communities were able to meet, enhance their literacy skills and share and validate their knowledge

Museums as sites of learning

Education and public service are essential to the mission of museums, and as a result, museum staff members are in the position in which they are able to expand and improve the educational brief of museums.

Museums are able to reach new audiences and engage in partnerships with communities, as was done in this instance through a partnership that was formed with St Francis Adult Education Centre in Langa, Cape Town.

Enriching learning experiences are offered in museums through human interaction and direct encounters with objects and ideas. Objects and artefacts were looked and handled both in the classroom in which classes took place as well as behind-the-scenes in the museum where collections were held and in laboratories. There was interaction between the students and the teacher as well as between students and various scientists who shared their knowledge and expertise with the students, such as palaeontologists, archaeologists and astronomers.

As cultural resources museum collections can be interpreted and re-interpreted in different ways to achieve different ends in the field of public education. For instance, the students presented their views of the objects on display both orally and in writing. An example of this is a debate that was held around the imminent closure of the controversial San diorama at the South African Museum, where the students held and expressed very strong views both for and against the closure of this display. The

views that were expressed by the Khoisan interest groups were shared with the students and written material was provided in preparation for this debate.

Museum literacy project: Background and motivation

In times of transformation, as was the case in the 1990s, museums were faced with having to respond to rapid change, while by their very nature, museums tend to be conservative environments. A challenge facing museums was that of attracting different, broader and more representative audiences as well as expanding existing audiences. They needed to become relevant and accessible and were redefining their relationship with communities in a variety of ways.

At the time it was estimated that approximately seven million South Africans were functionally illiterate. The African National Council's policy document stated the following: 'The ANC recognised that museums are cultural repositories which are first and foremost educational institutions forming part of the scientific and cultural structure of society, and are therefore deserving of State support. To this end the ANC policy will ensure that … "Educational programmes be made as widely accessible as possible, they are linked to other adult education and literacy programmes and integrate with the creative use of mass and popular media".

At the time I was teaching a literacy class at St Francis Adult Education Centre, whilst working at the South African Museum. I brought the students to the Museum, and found that there was much animated discussion around the Nguni material culture displays in the African Studies display area, and much information was exchanged. It was clear that the objects on display resonated with the students, and I felt that there was potential for enhancing the literacy skills of these students in a museum context.

This then was the context in which this project was initiated in 1995, and a partnership formed with St Francis Adult Education Centre.

Site of the project

As noted above, this literacy programme was based at the South African Museum, which was later to become part of an amalgamated structure, Iziko Museums of Cape Town. This structure comprised 15 museums in and around Cape Town.

A number of these museums were regularly visited, and used as a catalyst for learning. They are as follows: the South African National Gallery, the Michaelis Collection (Old Town House), the William Fehr Collection (based at the Castle of Good Hope), the Maritime Museum (including SAS Somerset), the Slave Lodge and the West Coast Fossil Park. A wide range of disciplines are represented in these museums, which made for a rich learning environment.

In the South African Museum the following spaces were used: a classroom, the exhibition areas, the Museum's online learning centre, MindSPACE, the Discovery Room, the Planetarium and the collections (behind-the-scenes).

Other sites that were visited include the Royal Observatory (Cape Town) and Kirstenbosch Botanical Gardens. The visits to the Observatory were done in conjunction with seeing Planetarium shows, having an astronomer present workshops and reading relevant literature. The Xhosa terms for celestial terms were obtained from the Xhosa-speaking education officer based at the Planetarium, and used to explain concepts.

Literacy project in action

Student profiles
Most students in the class came from Khayelitsha, and others were from Langa, and Phillippi. Many were related, and they spanned three generations (grandmother, mother, daughter and brother). They ranged in age from late teens to late 60s, and many were mothers with children, from toddlers to teenagers. There was a fairly even representation of both male and female students, and the first language of the students was mostly Xhosa, with a small number of students speaking Afrikaans. In general, they were from disadvantaged backgrounds, most struggled financially and were unemployed, lived in shacks and were educationally deprived.

Museum collections as points of departure

As has been noted the displays in the various museums provided the point of departure for discussion and learning. In the South African Museum the African Studies gallery, in which the material culture of the indigenous peoples were represented, was used extensively as were the San displays, fossil displays and marine displays. The West Coast Fossil Park provided a catalyst for learning about palaeontology, astronomy and botany.

Student writing

What follows are extracts from pieces of writing done by the students attending the classes, which elucidates their views of learning in a museum, and provides evidence that the idea of using a museum as a catalyst for learning is indeed appropriate and relevant. The quotes from the students' writing have been copied exactly as they were written down.

'… *you show us many things that we didn't know it and many things we didn't see.*'

'*I was happy too about a class that we've attended. A know a lot now the lessons that I missed from school know I know about.*'

'*I happy to know my background and about other animals background and where they are and how did they died. I've got a lot information in my head.*'

'*I love to learn more knowledge in this museum and better English.*'

'*I'm very interested in a museum. I want to be one of visitors of museum every Saturday.*'

'*Museums to me is right and it's the best because I learn many things that I didn't know it e.g. eclipse.*'

'*I come from Site C. I saw the advertiser pluked up with a bus stop in 2001 advertiser free education pls room number where the information was there. I got the information. Immediatly I got the decision if now and for ever I'm going to South African Museum.*'
(This quote shows how the classes were advertised, in this case through one of the students who put up a poster at a bus stop in Khayelitsha.)

'*I pass Grade 12 at Usasazo Secondary School in 2000. I hear this school from Neliswa Klaass so I want to improve my English and my knowledge. I am very interested in this class because I learn many things here so I like this class.*' (It is clear from the students' writing that many of them felt that they are able to add to what they learnt at school, or that they now had access to information and knowledge that they did not get at school.)

Unlocking memories

Several clay workshops were held in this programme. The workshops were preceded by visits to the African Studies display areas in the South African Museum, the Slave Lodge where, for example, there are examples of ancient Egyptian ceramics, or temporary exhibitions featuring pottery, at for instance, the South African National Gallery. Each workshop was preceded by reading relevant literature and discussion, which was then followed by writing about the workshops. What follows are extracts from students' writing. What is interesting to note is how often students refer to the time when they were young children.
'*I'm so interested to get a clay, because I was use to play with the clay when I was a little boy and now I was interested to have clay on my hands.*'

'*Firstly I'm do a tractor. When I'm do a track I remember about my uncle. My uncle she is got a fammer in King Williams Town. She used a tractor to carrying a water, milk and mealies.*'

'Clay pot. It made me very interested when I saw it because it remind me of long time ago when I was young. I used to play with clay making those beautiful pots. These pots are very important to our tradition.'

'Long time ago when we were young we use to play and spend our day long with clay making different shapes of animals and other things.'

Publications

The project inspired two publications. The one was an in-house publication that was based on students' writing, *The English students at the South African Museum talk*. Some of the stories that they wrote were published. The intention of this publication was to capture the knowledge the students brought to the classes, to validate this knowledge and to use this publication as a basis for discussion in class. In each instance the student's name was printed with their stories. The stories include 'Why do we cure skins?', 'Toys and games', 'What I think of the new South Africa' and 'What I like to eat'. A glossary of English and Xhosa words was added at the back of the booklet.

The foreword reads as follows: 'This booklet was inspired and created by the learners taking part in the literacy programme at the South African Museum. What they saw in the Museum formed the basis of the discussions which appear as stories in this booklet. Topics for discussion were chosen with the facilitator. Through these

discussion the learners improved their reading, writing and spoken English. They were active enthusiastic participants in this learner-centred programme. A wealth of knowledge and memories were brought to the classes and to the Museum by the learners. This booklet is a testimony to the importance of memories, oral history and knowledge.

The second publication was published by Juta and Co. It was intended was to use this publication both in the Museum and as a stand-alone publication. It appeared in English as *Spirits of the ancestors* and in Xhosa as *Amandla ezinyanya umoya wezinyanya*. The publication, in comic form, was based on the rock art displays in the South African Museum and, through the story, shows rock art where it is found, and highlights the importance of preserving rock art.

Computer literacy

The programme included regular sessions in the Museum's online learning Centre, MindSPACE. Students were assisted by both the staff in the centre, the teacher and by the Xhosa education officer, who could mediate in the students' first language.

The comments below were typed on computers in MindsSPACE, the Museum's online learning centre. The comments were based on visits to the Royal Observatory in Cape Town, and the last comment is on this online learning centre, and how computers and the centre are perceived by one of the students. The thoughts of the students were captured electronically and at the same time basic computer skills were being learnt. Most of the students had never had exposure to computers nor had they used them. One of the students said for instance that they 'thought the computer screen was a TV'. What follows are examples of students' writings.

'I was interested to the telescope the way it look like. I thought it was a big camera stading on tip of the mountain looking like the apolo light having staps on it. I was amazing to see that it is a machine standing on the floor. I am happy to see it with my eyes. Because I had about it long time ago when I was at a school. The place like observatory is not easy to go to it, so I thank to our teacher for a good chance she gave us that we didn't get when we were at school.'

'It was my first time to visit observatory. I didn't even heard about it before. It is nice to see such a wonderful things som it the I used to see them on the papers like Telescope. But I know the real telescope. It is interesting to see big machine like that I saw there, and its amazing to find they they als want to make more machines that are bigger than that ones... I would like to go there at night to see all different kinds stars.'

'I am learn at South African Museum, here they help me to learn more about everything as to develop as person. As for now, Iam busy studing computer which I take as a new challenge in my life because I never knew I would get such opportunite.'

I would like to note that students commented on the non-obvious aspects of adult learning, for instance, they said that they were more confident, that they felt that they can now express themselves, that they can now speak in front of people and that they speak better English.

Exhibitions

The students were involved in the creation of displays at the South African Museum in two instances. In the first, the fact that so much discussion took place, and there was so much writing about indigenous knowledge, a new exhibition called *Ulwazi lwemvelo: indigenous knowledge in southern Africa* was indirectly inspired by the students. It included the following elements: Khoekhoe mats (including housing), iron smelting and plants and healing.

The following are some of the examples of writing by students that inspired this exhibition.

'Herbs is very important in our culture. In old day our grand mothers use to put herbs in their gardens.'

'Our topics is herbs. I am going to tell you about herbs. There are people in our culture called Amaxhwele (herbalists). These people know about herbs…'

In the second instance, knowledge brought to the classes by students was incorporated in a label in the exhibition, *Go Bats!*. What follows are extracts from these writings.

'The bat is a funny bird or an animal. When I was a young girl there was a belief that the bat it is an animal that used by witches.'

'In our culture we call we call it a bad luck because it make bad things because if it takes a piece of your hair you will be mad.'

'Bat is a good medication to the people who believe in Xhosa medications… You cannot take any bat and make medication. You must choose black bat. Black bat is a good one to make medication.'

This translated into this label:
- Witches use bats as agents of bad fortune.
- If a bat takes a bit of your hair, it can make you go mad.
- Bats are used by sangomas, especially black bats.
- When bats get inside a house they bring bad luck.

Validation of knowledge

It was my intention to validate the knowledge the students brought to the classes and to incorporate this knowledge in the work of the Museum. This was done through the publications, the inspiration for the *Ulwazi lwemvelo: indigenous knowledge in southern Africa* and the incorporation of knowledge in the *Go Bats!* display. The following extracts I believe demonstrate the importance of validating this knowledge.

'Beer strainer is an very important thing in our culture even today.'

'In our culture beads are important because we make many things like earing, bangs, you can even decorate.'

The following comment is an extract from a student's written after a visit to the Slave Lodge.

'It is a beautiful place. I was glad to see the dolls in the reception because they remind me of where I come from.'

Family literacy

What is family literacy?

The term 'family literacy' was first coined by Denny Taylor in 1983. The term is a complex concept with multiple dimensions, and can be defined in many different ways. It can be seen as a set of oral, graphic and symbolic ways through which family members exchange and retain information and meaning (Benjamin and Lord: 1996), and it encompasses ways in which parents and family members use literacy in their home and community (DeBruin-Parecki and Paris: 1997). For the literacy classes at the South African Museum, we interpreted the term 'family' in the most inclusive sense, and assumed that it encompassed significant others and extended family or community members whenever relevant (Shively: 2001: 1)

The literacy project and family literacy

Family literacy can be stimulated and supported by organisations outside of families, as in the literacy project initiated by the South African Museum. Its classes were based on oral recounting of previous knowledge held by students as well as new knowledge gained, and skills gained in reading and writing English could be used at home and in the community, as could newly gained computer skills and scientific and cultural knowledge.

A central aim of projects supporting family literacy is to break the cycle of educational deprivation. This project attempted to do this by providing tools parents and children, and the broad community, can use to improve literacy, and by making a vast amount of information accessible to them. The potential impact of the project on its participants is best expressed in a quote from one of them:

'I never used to look at the stars. Now they mean something to me'.

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Making Literacy Popular in Africa: Beyond the Limitations of an Elite Book Market

The Story of "Let's Make Books"

Lucy Thornton

Woz'obona

Abstract

The Problem:
Insufficient resources to publish good reading materials for learners
Dearth of mother-tongue literature
Parental lack of confidence in relation to reading and writing
Teachers lack of confidence and skills to teach literacy, and lack of resources

The Solution:
Workshops ("Let's Make Books!") to show trainers, teachers and parents how they can generate meaningful text, and how they can encourage learners to do the same
Workshops to give teachers and parents ideas and skills for involving learners in reading and writing
Sharing ideas about lending libraries consisting of homemade books
Providing opportunities for discussion and debate about best teaching practices in literacy

Background: This project was created out of the realization that Africa cannot create a culture of reading and learning through publishing small numbers of books, in limited numbers of languages. Since it is abundantly clear that the country has rich storytelling traditions and much untapped creativity, why not empower people by demonstrating to them how they can become authors?

Vision

The Woz'obona Let's Make Books programme will be offered to all pre-schools and primary schools in South Africa, and will encourage literacy as a pleasurable shared activity within families.

Background

Woz'obona is an early childhood development Non Profit Organisation which has adapted a Montessori curriculum for South African circumstances and created a methodology for training educarers to use the curriculum for children. Over the years as gaps have emerged and as new issues have emerged in the early childhood development (ECD) sector Woz'obona has risen to the challenge by creating new curricula and methodology. Woz'obona Programmes conceptualised and developed to date are

- Levels 1 and 4 ECD
- HIV/AIDS and Children
- Safety Nets for Children
- Let's Make Books
- ECD Site Sustainability

Ga Masemola is a small town in the Limpopo province of South Africa. Resources are scarce but the community recognises the need for a good education and they have come up with a way of involving pre-schoolers in their own learning. Paulina Mphati teaches at the Lekgolane Mphepeleng pre-school. Her students are just discovering the world around them and they need a lot of visual stimulation to help them develop their creativity.

Today Paulina's students will be helping her stock the school library. The children draw pictures, and Paulina asks them to tell her about their pictures. Their pictures are usually about a good experience they have had or about a member of their family. Because the children can't write the story themselves, Paulina does it for them but makes sure that each story is written the way the child tells it. Paulina reads the stories back to the children to make sure that it is in the child's own words. The children enjoy each other's stories and get to show off their own story-telling skills as well. Nonki, one of Paulina's learners, 'reads' her story about a person who is clapping hands and singing because they have a new suit, and the class is enthralled.

When school is finished Paulina walks Nonki home. Nonki has taken her new book home with her to show her mother. By reading to her mother Nonki is sharing her skills with her.

The next day Nonki returns her book to the school and enjoys the other home made books in the school library. The young authors' books are proudly displayed on the library table. The children can borrow each other's books and take them home to read to their families, just like any library. Each of these children has written and illustrated several books, creating a very special school library filled with their own very special stories. With just a few basic materials, children everywhere can make their own books.

Let's Make Books

Let's Make Books arose in 1999 to improve a weakness in the Woz'obona-adapted Montessori curriculum. The curriculum provided a good phonics foundation, but neglected the areas of imagination, creativity, storytelling, and language experience. Adding these elements seemed essential and linking them to the phonics would be important. Some aspects of emergent literacy and how adults can facilitate it with children was another identified gap in the old curriculum. A whole language approach seemed to be the answer. Now the curriculum has an even more sophisticated balanced approach to literacy that combines children's phonemic awareness and their whole-language knowledge. This change/improvement has advanced our knowledge way beyond the classical Montessorian conception.

The Woz'obona programme employs a "writing to read" approach to children's literacy. Children generate their own simple texts, and these form the basis of a structured, balanced language process in which they learn further reading skills. There are many early literacy programmes that rest on the availability of a large number of children's books, including basal reading series, in a learning environment. While Woz'obona encourages the use of real books, the poor communities in which it

works simply cannot afford large libraries for children. The ability of children to generate and share their own reading materials in the context of a structured literacy curriculum becomes the crucial basis of their ability to learn to read effectively. A more constructive and balanced literacy experience for young children is the result.

Simply put – 'Follow the child'

The basis for the Let's Make Books approach is simplicity itself – children draw and they draw what they are thinking about, what they are imagining. Why not use this creative drawing as the basis for reading and writing? The magic words "Tell me about your picture" are used to encourage the child to tell the story of the picture. Then, with the permission of the child to write the story, the adult writes the story in the child's words. This makes it easier for the child to "read" the story, and it also assists with the child's letter/sound awareness. Whole language and phonics are inextricably linked to motivate the child to read and write and provide the maximum support and encouragement to the child during the process.

Children at the Ntataise Pre-School in Sekhukhune, Limpopo make their own books, share them with each other at school, and, through their pre-school library, have the opportunity to take their books and other childrens' books home to read to and with their families.

How was the Woz'obona pilot done?

Woz'obona conceptualised a pilot of Let's Make Books which would include curriculum development, trainer training, teacher-training and family involvement. The pilot period was three years, 2001 to 2003. Let's Make Books was offered to one group of trainees in a peri-urban setting, Orange Farm in Gauteng and another group in a rural setting Sekhukhune, in Limpopo. A set of monitoring and evaluation tools was created to allow us to assess impact on children, teachers, trainers and families, and an external evaluator was contracted**.**

1. Curriculum development

Since the ultimate target of the intervention was children, in our curriculum development process that is where we started. We asked and answered these questions in this order:

- What do we want children to be able to do and how will we accomplish that?
- What will our teachers need in order to be able to work with children?
- What will our trainers need to be able to prepare teachers adequately?
- How will parental involvement be addressed?

The biggest challenge was the question of how to change attitudes, values and beliefs about reading among the adults with whom we would work. We knew that South Africa did not have a reading culture and we suspected this had to do with the way reading was taught, so we decided to illuminate the history. We asked participants in the Let's Make Books training sessions to draw their first memory of reading, and write the story to go with it. We were amazed at the result. These reflections emerged from teachers and trainers drawings and stories:

- Second and third language texts were imposed before reading in the mother tongue was established.
- Phonics was perceived to be all important.
- Some teachers apparently thought that learning a,e,i,o,u was the most important part of learning to read!
- Teacher preparation and resourcing were inadequate.
- Teachers themselves were poorly taught and were not readers.
- Motivation to read and write was underplayed.
- Too little attention was paid to the importance of meaning in reading.
- Humiliation and punishment were used and this sometimes resulted in trauma associated with reading and a lifelong dislike of reading.
- Few teachers and parents regarded reading for fun and pleasure as important.

With such a tortured history it is little wonder that we do not have a 'culture of reading' in South Africa. We realised that whenever we worked with adults we would have to address the issue of their own history of reading in order to help them to access and understand their attitudes, values and beliefs about reading. Our curriculum development and methodology had to address this. As we implemented the pilot the reflections of the trainers, teachers and parents assisted us to continue to develop and refine the curriculum and methodology employed.

2. Trainer intervention

Woz'obona uses a cascade approach in its training. The first step to introducing Let's Make Books was to begin with training the trainers.
At Woz'obona, trainers are trained, and they in turn train teachers. To ensure optimal transmission of the learning, mentoring on-site and self-assessment and trainer assessment are used. With Let's Make Books this meant that we would train our trainers, give them assignments to assess their learning of theory and practice and

those assignments would include their training of teachers. These are some examples of the assignments which became part of Let's Make Books:

- Doing "Let's Make Books" activities with children in a preschool setting and in a home environment
- Working with one child, over time, and allowing that child to keep a literacy journal, with drawings, writing, etc.
- Keeping a journal as a trainer to reflect on the experience of working with a single child
- Reflecting on the children's curriculum and methodology
- Reflecting on the teacher's training
- Reflecting on their own training.

During the 3 year pilot trainers met every 6 months to reflect and review. In these in-service sessions they took decisions on changes needed, continued to develop activities and curriculum to address perceived gaps, addressed challenges, and evaluated the successes.

3. Teacher intervention

The teachers who were the learners in the project were all enrolled in the Woz'obona Early Childhood Development (ECD) course which is accredited. Let's Make Books was added to their training, which consisted of Levels One and Four ECD, with Level Three electives. Between training sessions the teachers received support visits from trainers, who worked with the teachers and children to ensure that there was a good understanding and implementation of the new literacy activities. Teachers were assessed on their assignments, and on what was being implemented in the classroom. So, for example if a teacher had not created a print-rich environment in her school by labelling objects, displaying children's drawings, and having homemade books available for the children, the trainer would question why this was the case and assist the teacher to address the gaps and problems.

4. Family intervention

This aspect provided the biggest challenge to Woz'obona because prior to this we had not worked with families. We of course encouraged teachers to involve families in the running of the school, but we had no direct involvement with families. We were fortunate however that COUNT, a sister agency specialising in teacher upgrading in numeracy, had invited us to become a partner in the Family Maths and Science (FMS) project which they had initiated.

Two very significant things happened during our piloting of FMS. Firstly we realised that this method would be perfect for helping us to address the challenge of how we, and the preschool teachers, could begin to engage directly with families. Secondly we decided that FMS needed a literacy component and suggested to COUNT that we become management partners and add literacy to the programme. This was agreed and FMS became FMSL (Family Maths Science and Literacy).

Let's Make Books was adapted for use within FMSL. In year two of the pilot we began to run FMSL workshops with parents, and we trained the 20 other partner agencies who were using FMS in how to add literacy to their family education workshops. FMSL gained because the programme became richer through the addition of the literacy, and Woz'obona gained because we met the challenge of how to engage families directly, and learned a great deal about working in partnership with other agencies.

Evaluation

A brief summary of each aspect of the evaluation is included here. The full report is available, on request.

Trainers

Woz'obona (WB) and Sekhukhune Educare Project (SEP) trainers appear to understand the importance of early literacy and are able to communicate this effectively to practitioners. They display an enthusiasm for working with practitioners to develop their understanding of literacy. Despite the finding that their understanding of some concepts in the training material was patchy (i.e. defining emergent literacy and whole language), the positive changes in the practitioners and their centres they appear to have effectively communicated important information on early literacy.

To highlight the enthusiasm of trainers the following is an extract from the research report:

> "It was clear from the teaching aids, reports and recall of how adults and children have responded to the information that she (the trainer) gave them, that she finds early literacy fascinating. She has taken her teaching aids, for example the birthday chart, and used this to encourage parents to make one for their home and to talk to their children about relationships and names. She encourages mothers to cut labels from household products and to help children recognise them and so extend their knowledge about each one. She has made books for parents so that they can write their own stories and also encourage their children to make books and write stories. Parents have asked for advice on, for example, how to help children write or tell their stories in the correct sequence. She shows parents how to make and use puppets to tell stories. She has adapted the classroom poster (respect, observe, follow etc) to home use.

Children and Parents

The case studies showed that more children who spent time in centres with practitioners trained by Woz'obona and Sekhukhune Educare Project demonstrated a greater development of literacy skills than those not attending preschool.

It appears that there was a change in parental attitudes towards literacy once children began attending centers with a WB or SEP trained practitioner. Parents generally did want their children to develop particular literacy skills before starting primary school,

i.e. reading and writing. It is very encouraging to find that more homemade books, journals and displayed art work than during the initial visits. More parents in the final interview said they read to their children. As most homes did not have children's books the home-made books activity in the workshops appeared to have been very useful.

ECD teachers (practitioners)
In the research there was an attempt to assess whether once a practitioner attends WB or SEP training there was a change in her attitude towards early literacy, and her knowledge of and ability to support the development of children's literacy. It appears that there was a change as more home made books were displayed and many practitioners made comments that showed an understanding of the importance of these for the centres and for the children's own self image. Although more schools had books by the final visit, some schools did not display them and this raised the question of whether or not those practitioners understood the importance of free access to books. Other practitioners did show an understanding of this, giving a range of reasons. Practitioners showed an understanding of the importance of a print rich environment as evidenced by the changes noted in their centres. In addition, practitioners were better prepared for the story telling session in the last visit and this appears to indicate that they had benefited from the training sessions.

What were the key elements in the success of the programme?

Attitude change

Attitude change became a key element in the programme. The drawing and story of the first memory of reading is an integral part of the training and has been used with all groups, regardless of their educational level and experience. In all instances participants have said that this activity helped them to reflect on the past, and motivated them to want to change in the future. Teachers and parents would often comment that they didn't want the next generation of children to suffer as they had suffered, and that they would work to make reading pleasurable. Our Woz'obona trainers believe that this has been one of the most important reasons why Let's Make Books has been successful.

Follow-up

In the conceptualisation of Let's Make Books we knew that being able to follow up with children, families, teachers, and trainers would be key to the success of the programme. Woz'obona's history of success in other programmes could often in large part be traced back to the important on-site visits. Visiting the learner allows the trainer to see and experience the real challenges that practitioners face in the field, but perhaps more importantly, it allows and encourages the trainer to help the practitioner solve the problems. We were fortunate that the funding support for this programme allowed us to offer this valuable service. Combining this with an action/reflection approach allowed us as an agency to reflect on and improve the programme as it evolved.

What does Let's Make Books accomplish?

- It allows children to express (through drawing, discussion, and writing) their concerns and feelings, thereby contributing to emotional and social well-being and an increased self-confidence
- It creates mother-tongue literature and low-cost libraries
- It celebrates, honours and preserves family history, culture, and traditions
- It motivates children and adults to learn to read and to read for pleasure
- It makes reading fun, for everyone

What were the outcomes of the pilot?

- Let's Make Books is available as a manual.
- Two videos have been produced – one which depicts Let's Make Books in a rural setting and another in an urban area
- 400 ECD teachers have received the training
- ECD agencies have indicated an interest in incorporating the programme into their work
- Aspects of Let's Make Books were successfully incorporated into the COUNT/Woz'obona Family Maths Science and Literacy programme
- The programme has been presented at the bi-annual Pan African Reading Association in Swaziland in August 2005, and at the UKZN Family Literacy conference in Pietermaritzburg in September, 2005.
- Woz'obona as an agency learned a great deal about partnerships – through the FMSL process and the Family Literacy Network.

What is the future of Let's Make Books?

Let's Make Books is now and will continue to be an important part of the preschool teacher training programme of Woz'obona. Additionally through the FMSL project we were able to share aspects of Let's Make Books with other agencies which have now incorporated this training into their programme work. However we are not satisfied that this is adequate outreach. Let's Make Books is a simple, cost-effective way to address the dearth of literature in the vernacular, and therefore it should be part of every school's literacy programme, and perhaps part of every community's development plan. Our challenge now is how to make that happen.

The Family Maths Science' Literacy and Life Skills Experience (FMSLL) in South Africa

Norman Reynolds, Lucy Thornton, Mirna Lawrence

Country Background

There are two enormous gaps in South Africa's education system. 60% of South Africa's children do not reach the final 'matric' school year.[1] Some 32% of the adult population, or 14.3 million adults, may be regarded as functionally illiterate.[2] As serious, many matriculants, despite being taught literacy, maths and science, score well below expected norms, particularly in maths and science. How, then, can South Africa stimulate millions to improve their literacy and numeracy proficiency outside of the formal education system?

The origins of this education crisis is the legacy of apartheid and an entrenched philosophy of Christian National Education. Government has since taken a conscious decision to move towards an outcomes-based education policy that acknowledges the need for children to investigate , explore and construct their own reality and meaning while in a learning environment. It may take a new generation of teachers who are not threatened by change, and more intellectually and economically 'competent' parents and children, before outcome-based programmes can take root effectively.

Other factors handicap school improvement:

1. The lack of education amongst parents/carers of children means that between 80% and 90% of the people looking after children are women – and the literacy rate among women in the areas surveyed (KwaZulu-Natal, Eastern Cape and Limpopo) is only 70% or less.
2. A striking 65% of children interviewed reported that no one in the house was sufficiently "educated" to help them with their homework.[3]
3. Behind these facts lie the difficulty with paying fees when unemployment is above 40%, when most families live in township and rural areas that continue to be 'non-working' local economies with 80% local economic inactivity, are still highly dependent upon the state and the modern economy, and are characterised by massive child hunger and a rising number of HIV/AIDS orphans.
4. Tragically, some 11 million of 30 million adults will never have a formal job. They need the confidence to deal with the world in order to create work for themselves; something education is not doing.
5. Parents in poor communities often say that their greatest sadness is that they are "bad parents". The Constitution supports their call for assistance to become good parents but it clearly places the responsibility for children with parents. The state may only step in if there is a breakdown.

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[1] The great majority of South Africans are 'black Africans'. Whites, Asians and, to a lesser extent, Coloured children do not suffer the same deprivation. For instance, 10% of children, virtually all black, do not even make it to the start, Grade 1. Department of Education, from "Emerging Voices: A Report on Education in South African Rural Communities", Mail and Guardian Supplement, February 11, 2005, page 4.
[2] The South African National Literacy Initiative has a budget of just US$1.5 million a year!
[3] "Emerging Voices", ibid

The Family Maths, Science, Literacy and Life Skills Programme (FMSLL)

FMSLL in South Africa is derived from similar programmes developed in the USA.[4] These originally targetted the under-performance in school in maths and science by minority groups and girl learners.

For South Africa, Literacy and Life Skills components have been added and a programme for very young children developed   Suitably adapted, it has proved to be a low cost and effective initiative, and is easily multiplied through the training of other agency staff, facilitators, care givers, youth and teachers who run the workshops in their communities.

In the three-year pilot period (2002 – 2004), there has been little quantitative research, notably on the lack of parental involvement in education in general and with schools in particular, and no means to undertake longitudinal studies to assess impact on children and adults. Extensive qualitative reporting, however, is very positive. The knowledge and experience exist to launch a national programme to cover the majority of families.[5]

How it Works

FMSLL facilitators are trained in the activities, how to facilitate them, and how to plan, monitor and evaluate workshops. Children, their parents / carers and often teachers are invited to FMSLL workshops. Activities are introduced and parents and children are encouraged to explore the resources. The facilitator shows the parents and children how to do the activities and models good interaction between parents and children. Parents and children then do the activities together and, if there are difficulties, the facilitators gently intervene. When completed, the facilitator encourages both children and parents to evaluate the activities. Facilitators explain how activities can be done, and even extended, at home. Follow-up workshops build upon parent experiences.

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[4] Developed by the Lawrence Hall of Science, Berkeley and Portland University, Oregon.
[5] The pilot was funded by an anonymous American foundation. If South African backing is forthcoming, the foundation will consider continuation of its support. Fortunately many of the agencies that were trained have been able to incorporate FMSLL into their other programmes and obtain funding for them.

Activity 1: Measuring spoons

In this activity children learn something about how much space is in a container. They also learn how to use numbers to measure the space of the container.

## What will children learn and do in this activity?

They will:

➤ Estimate (judge how much)
➤ Check their estimates
➤ Measure
➤ Count
➤ Compare their estimate with the actual amount

STEP 1: Guessing how much sand it takes

☆ Put children into pairs. Give each pair a dice or a spinner, one cup, a spoon and a bowl of sand.

☆ Ask each child to guess how many spoons of sand it will take to fill the cup. Write down their names and the number they said if they can't yet write these themselves. Or, put each child's name on a piece of paper and then let them draw the number with dots on the paper.

STEP 2: A race to fill the cup

☆ Give each pair enough small stones to count with.

☆ The children in each pair take turns to spin the spinner or roll the dice.

☆ Each child says what number they rolled on the dice or spinner.

☆ The child counts out, and spoons up, that number of spoonfuls of sand and pours them into the cup. For example, if they scored a six they count up six spoonfuls of sand.
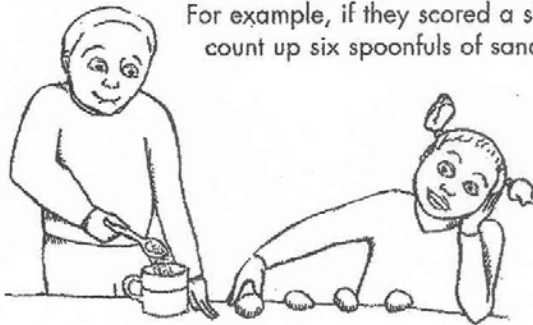
CHECK: Are the children ready?

☐ Will the children understand that one stone can stand for one spoonful of sand when they count and measure how much sand is used?

☐ Will the children be able to count the stones accurately?

You may need to spend some time preparing children on these aspects.

YOU WILL NEED:

For each pair of children:

☐ A teaspoon

☐ A plastic cup

☐ Small stones or beans for counting

☐ A spinner or dice

☐ A bowl of clean sand. (Use rice or mielie meal if you want to.)

CHECK the difficulty level:

Will your children use a dice or spinner confidently? The spinner/dice is fun and also lets children use more numbers. But your children may manage better if you leave out the dice/spinner. Then they can just fill their cup with spoonfuls and count out a stone for each spoonful. As they get more confident, bring in the dice/spinner.

4

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The FMSLL model highlights the important role that family and community support plays in young children's learning. At the same time, by participating in the FMSLL workshops with their children, adults (including teachers) with low literacy, numeracy, scientific and life-skills and knowledge, are able to explore and to access such skills knowledge in a non-threatening, interactive and enjoyable way.

The FMSLL curriculum spans activities for children aged 4 to 15. The activities, while not aiming to replace the school curriculum or formal approaches to teaching children and adults literacy or numeracy skills, can be linked to more formal programmes in terms of content covered, and methodology and mediation strategies advocated particularly as they have been designed against the demands of the Revised National Curriculum Statements (RNCS).

For the young child or school going learner, the FMSLL programme builds links between informal learning in the home or community with more formal learning that might happen in an Early Child Development centre or school. Direct links can be made between the activities experienced at a workshop and the universal core skills and knowledge that both children and adults need.

The International Experience with Families Included in Education

There is good evidence from other countries that family inclusion in education has significant positive impact. Research in America showed that programmes that include families as participants in their children's education, as against control groups whose parents were not involved either educationally or in parenting programmes, achieved the following:

1. They encouraged the child's carers to be actively involved in their child's education;
2. They modelled positive parenting;
3. They led to the children, by age 27:
   - earning twice that of the control group,
   - being three times more likely to own a home,
   - being only one fifth as likely to have been arrested for repeat criminal offences[6],
   - were half as likely to need special education by grade 9,
   - were one-third more likely to graduate high school by age 19
   - were three times more likely to enrol in a 4 year college programme by age 21.[7]
4. Participating mothers increased their own education during the project.

A general finding which is important for South Africa to note was that, "Programmes that combine child-focused educational activities with explicit attention to parent-child interaction patterns and relationship building appear to have the greatest impacts."[8] Other studies highlight the considerable educational and economic returns that flow from this approach.[9]

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[6] Information from the Perry Preschool Programme.

[7] Information from the Carolina Abecedarian Project.

[8] The American Prospect Special report: Early Childhood Starting Young: The Case for Investing in America's Kids. Similarly, the Incredible Years Programme in the USA has shown that, changing

FMSLL in South Africa

COUNT and Woz'obona implemented the FMSLL pilot over a four-year period, from 2001 to 2004. COUNT is a numeracy/mathematics training agency, and Woz'obona an Early Childhood Development Agency. They worked together in collaboration with 21 diverse partner organisations or groups dealing with Orphaned and Vulnerable Children, HIV/Aids, Pre-schools and crèches and that work in prisons, community based organisations and ECD centers.

During 2002 and 2003, 354 FMSLL workshops were run. 1,640 adults and an equivalent number of children attended. Fifty facilitators have been trained. 120 activities have been written. The "ripple effect" of FMSLL training will be widespread as the skills and knowledge enters participants' homes, families, communities and work situations.

The primary focus of the FMSLL pilot was to see how parents, family members or adults from previously disadvantaged communities, with generally low levels of numeracy, literacy and science, could play a meaningful and active role in their children's development. Research has shown that the interest of even just one significant adult in a child's life can positively influence that child's interest and success in learning and general achievement. The FMSLL facilitation ethos not only assists parents to act as their child's first – and most interested – teacher, it also models a mutually respectful and loving co-operative learning relationship between adult and child. This impacts on parenting strategies, including discipline. Another purpose was to assess whether taking part in these activities promoted the adults' own interest in numeracy / maths, science, literacy skills and life skills knowledge.

Given the grim realities of South Africa today, adults and older siblings in the community are now increasingly having to take a more active role in educating young children, many of whom spend erratic periods at schools or ECD centres and rely on home-based care and support. The use of FMSLL to improve the educational and parenting skills of those caring for children – increasingly a community issue - will have a critical effect on their young charges personal and educational success in life.

That FMSLL can transform lives, and not just provide new understandings around maths, science, literacy and life skills is evidenced by the following anecdotal reports of the way in which peoples lives have changed for the better after their interactions and engagement with FMSLL.

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negative parenting strategies to more positive ones, has an overall positive effect. Their research shows that 'children in such programmes scored above the state and district averages for school readiness, and were far above the averages for other poor children (who were not included in the programme)'.
[9] Hart and Risely argue that '(improved) differences in parenting during the first three years were far more powerful predictors of a child's success in third grade than was socio-economic status. James Heckman, Nobel laureate and University of Chicago economist argues that the benefits of early childhood interventions in cognitive learning, motivation and socialisation are likely to have long-term advantages in the labour market because of the cumulative effects of early improvements in ability. Art Rolnick, of the Federal Reserve Bank in Minneapolis, and colleague Rob Grunewald, estimate that financial investment in programmes to assist poor children yields a 16 per cent rate of real return

1. FMSLL has reached out to the youth, the most unemployed group. Fifteen youth in the town of Sasolburg were trained to facilitate FMSLL within their communities. An unexpected and interesting result was that seven members of the group who had dropped out of school were motivated to return to school and continue their studies with a renewed interest in maths and science. Those who had remained at school throughout found that the FMSLL programme assisted and supported the maths and science they were doing in school and made it easier for them to access and integrate the information learnt at school.

2. Homeless youth, accessed through the Twilight Kids and Kids Haven venues, also reported that they found that FMSLL helped them to understand the maths and science they learnt at their schools. They used the knowledge they gained at the FMSLL workshops to assist the younger children at their respective places of care.

3. Young medium risk offenders, both male and female, who were studying for their matric certificates through Correctional Services, reported that the FMSLL programme had directly influenced their decision to study maths or science. Others reported that FMSLL helped them to understand these two subjects if they had already been studying them before the FMSLL programme was introduced to the prison. Many of the young male offenders stated that as a result of the FMSLL intervention they now had valuable skills to offer to their communities on their return to civilian life. Others said that as a result of the FMSLL intervention they would return to school, once they were released from prison. The young mothers, in prison for misdemeanors such as theft, drugs, drug smuggling and even murder, said that their relationships with their babies before they participated in FMSLL tended to be quite harsh and impatient. Through the FMSLL intervention they learnt to be kinder and more gentle, and also better able to attend to their baby's developmental needs. They believed they were better able to stimulate their children emotionally, socially and intellectually.

4. The Itsoseng FMSLL site reached into the lives of an impoverished and abandoned group of Ovambo living in South Africa along the border with Namibia. These people, women and children, live in dire poverty in a deeply rural area called Rhenosterkloof. The Namibian government will not take responsibility for their welfare as they are in South Africa and the South African authorities will not take responsibility for them because they are Namibian and are close to the Namibian border. They live without water or electricity, miles from shops or clinics. The women have themselves never been exposed to education. After a series of FMSLL workshops they reported the following through interpreters:
- "I have gained from the experience of working together with my child, through FMSLL."
- "I have new understandings and feel I can now get involved with my child's schooling."
- "I feel that through FMSLL I have gained knowledge and skills that make me a better person. Even as a parent I have been helped, especially where my child's education is concerned."

Evaluation

The benefits of FMSLL have been borne out in the extensive evaluative feedback collected over the three-year period, including interviews with adult beneficiaries. This includes extensive reporting on the interactions between adults and children at FMSLL workshops. The children have developed their vocabulary for maths and science, their critical thinking has been challenged and their understanding of basic maths and science concepts has increased considerably. The relationship between parent and child has changed so that a more tender and mutually loving and co-operative interaction exists. As with the adults, the children's self–esteem has improved along with their skills and knowledge.

The feedback has been collected through an action research process that underpins the implementation and evaluation methodology adopted by the programme. While no longitudinal study has been done, or quantifiable evidence of impact collected, the following quotes provide qualitative measures of the programme's impact over the years:

> *"I am learning at the same time as my child. This is good because then my child knows I am not uneducated and I know and understand about maths and science too."*

> *"I wish I had done maths and science like this when I was at school-maybe then I wouldn't have dropped them (as subjects)."*

> *"I am going to look and see maths and science in everything that I do. I am a mathematician and a scientist-and I didn't even know it!"*

> *"I used to think that I had to reach into my pocket to buy expensive educational toys from the shop to help my children to learn. Now I can see that I have got things around the house that don't cost extra money that can help them to learn. I never knew that before!"*

> *"I left my work in the fields to come to this workshop so that I could learn to count my cattle. I know which cattle are mine and what their names are but I do not know how to count them."*

While waiting for practice to catch up with policy and policy with educational need, and for the Constitutional right to (effective) education to be realised for all children, FMSLL is a programme that, at least cost, can reach where government intervention does not, gets parents involved and helps communities to realise the Ubuntu injunction, "All Children Are My Children".

FMSLL certainly has succeeded in the areas where it has been implemented – but implementation has not been as deep and as wide as would be aspired to due only to the lack of funding. Until there is a national FMSLL campaign, it is more cost effective to add FMSLL to pre-schools and other existing institutions that can engage parents and community. A key challenge remains to achieve government interest and buy-in.

Section 2

Papers from neighbouring countries

Family Literacy programme in Namibia: What ways a family literacy programme can assist parents and other care providers to support their children in the first years of primary school.

Mr S.M. Kasokonya and Ms S.N. Kutondokua

Ministry of Education and Culture, Namibia

Abstract

The main purpose of this study was to find out in what ways a family literacy programme could assist parents and other care providers to support their children in the first years of primary school. It was conducted through semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions and observations. The sample was limited to one lower primary school and community in each educational region and information was obtained from the principals, teachers, learners, parents and other care providers. A total of 229 learners, 48 teachers, 13 principals from thirteen different lower primary schools and 89 parents or care providers in 78 homes were involved in this study.

The main findings were: that principals and teachers experience lack of confidence/shyness/fear, lack of parental support, lack of kindergarten/ pre-school experience when children start school. The study also shows that principals and teachers expect children to read and write their names, speak in mother tongue, hold a pencil, draw pictures or sing or tell stories when they start school.

Furthermore, the study has revealed that parents should send their children to pre-school, read them stories, teach them numbers and train them on hygiene. The study also shows that parents or care providers do not help children to read or do homework or ask them about schoolwork. Finally, the study indicated that learners like reading, writing, counting, singing and playing with friends at school.

Literature Review

A worldwide volume of literature reveals a growing body of information regarding family literacy and a number of "best practices" of highly successful literacy programmes. Due to various assumptions and perceptions held by academics, practitioners, policy makers, etc about family literacy, there is no universally accepted definition of family literacy. For instance, practitioners in this filed argue that family literacy as a concept is still considered to be in its infancy, particularly when compared to early childhood and adult basic education programmes.

Nonetheless, in an attempt to define family literacy, some researchers and practitioners have sought to include the following components in their definition:

a) interactive literacy activities between parents and their children;
b) training for parents on how to be their children's primary teacher and to be full partners in the education of their children;
c) parent literacy training; and
d) early childhood education.

Based on this definition there are three core services that can be provided to all families, namely, parenting education, adult basic education and early childhood education, with some activities provided with parents and children together and some instructional components taking place in the home (Benjamin & Lord, 1996).

However, the Family Literacy Commission of the International Reading Association has provided the following definition.

> Family literacy encompasses the ways parents, children and extended family members use literacy at home and in their community. Sometimes family literacy occurs naturally during the routines of daily living and helps adults and children "get things done." These events might include using drawings or writings to share ideas; composing notes or letters to communicate messages; making lists; reading and following directions; or sharing stories and ideas through conversation, reading and writing. Family literacy may be initiated purposefully by a parent or may occur spontaneously as parents and children go about the business of their daily lives. Family literacy activities may also reflect the ethnic, racial or cultural heritage of the families involved (Morrow, Paratore and Tracy, 1994).

From the above definition, it is evident that family literacy is loaded with many different role players (immediate and extended family, parents, children, outside institutions or organisations, etc) and supports a diverse range of activities depending on the philosophical foundation of the program.

Family literacy was first written of in the United States of America and United Kingdom during the seventies. Since then the concept has been used as way of tackling poor performance of school children in disadvantaged communities. Evaluations in the UK and USA have found such techniques to be very effective (Brooks, Greg, *et al*, 1996, and Benjamin, L Ann, ed. 1996).

Research shows that family literacy programmes are intergenerational and seek to
a) help parents build on home literacy activities, work on their own literacy and learn how to extend the help they give their children;
b) give children intensive early years teaching, with a strong emphasis on writing and talk as well as reading; and
c) in joint sessions, give parents opportunity to work with their children and use the strategies they have been taught for helping them.

There are many family literacy programmes in Southern Africa operating on one or a combination of the above assumptions. One such successful programme is the Family Literacy Project in the KwaZulu-Natal province of South Africa. The main aim of this Family Literacy Project, which brings together adult and early literacy, is to encourage young children and their adult carers to see learning to read as a shared pleasure and a valuable skill. The FLP's emphasis is on the enjoyable aspects of reading and writing, and underpinning this is the belief that learning is easier when actively learners are involved and having fun. Thus the work of the project is based on the understanding that for young children to become literate, reading and writing must be introduced into their lives as desirable and enjoyable skills. Adults who care for them, parents and teachers, should guide them and by example demonstrate the importance of literacy. It is imperative that adults are seen to be enjoying, being literate and using their skills in many different ways (Desmond, 2000).

Over the past 15 years the Namibian government has achieved massive improvements in the field of literacy. Namibia's national literacy programme for adults has reached approximately 80 per cent. Nearly 100 per cent of the lower primary age group, and about 90 per cent of all school age children are in school (Namibia Vision 2030: 2004). Despite all these gains there are still considerable inequalities in the performance of learners. The 1999 SACMEQ report and the grade 7 national results (Ministry of Education & Culture, 1992), for instance, paint a grim picture of the literacy levels of primary learners in many parts of Namibia. This evidence suggests that special efforts are therefore needed to close the gaps in the education system.

The idea of parent education and collaboration with formal school programme is being promoted in this country. Also, the government's recognition of Early Childhood Development has witnessed the establishment of numerous ECD programmes countrywide. Both these ideas are spreading rapidly throughout the country with the help of government and other forms of international and local funding.

However, Family Literacy is a new concept in Namibia's education system. In principle the Ministry of Basic Education, Sport and Culture recently decided to launch a Family Literacy Programme. This research document is the first attempt to document the current state of Family Literacy in the country upon which an Action Plan will be drawn by the Department of Culture and Lifelong Learning.

Research methodology

In the time available and with the resources at our disposal, it was agreed to undertake a small research study to find out in what ways a family literacy programme can assist parents and other care providers to support their children in the first years of primary school. The sample was therefore limited to one primary school and community in each region, and it was decided to obtain information from the principals and teachers, learners, parents and other care providers, as well as observing the environment in the school and the community.

The regions were asked to identify schools where they thought the family literacy programme could be piloted, so, in most regions, schools were selected because they were disadvantaged or isolated. In each school, the principal and three teachers were interviewed, the teachers being the Grade One teachers, Grade Two teachers and sometimes the Grade Three teacher.

Three groups of learners were interviewed, one group from Grade One, one group from Grade Two and the third group from Grade Three. In each group the teachers were asked to select two learners who were making good progress, two average learners and two learners who were not doing well. In order to obtain the views of the parents, the data collectors went to the homes of six parents for each school.

The principals and teachers were questioned on what they expected children starting Grade One to know, how much assistance they received from the parents and what they would like the parents to do and in relation to how they taught reading and writing. The learners were asked what support they received from the parents, what

their attitude was to school and what they did out of school. The parents were asked how they supported or would like to support their children's schoolwork, what they thought of the school and what activities they did with their children. It was possible to see how the responses from all three groups matched and where the differences occurred.

The data collectors worked in pairs, with one person conducting the interviews and the other making notes. The interviews were conducted in the home language of the interviewee. After the interview the note taker was asked to write up the responses in English for the purpose of the analysis. The interviews were also recorded so that the data collectors could check up on any part that they had missed or disagreed on.

Pre-testing

Draft questionnaires were drawn up by a group of NERA members and a pre-test was arranged at a school in Rehoboth. The pre-test proved immensely successful, with the principal, teachers and parents all agreeing on the value of a family literacy programme.

The pre-test in Rehoboth

The draft questionnaires were adapted as a result of the pre-test and were used in the training workshop for data collectors.

Training workshop

In such a survey, training of data collectors is vital and so it was agreed that a three-day workshop would be held at the Rossing Centre in Windhoek from 3 to 5 August. After discussions with the Ministry officials it was decided that the best data collectors would be the Regional Literacy Coordinators and the District Literacy Organisers. Two were invited from each region with Khomas sending four, as there were no transport or accommodation costs. At the workshop they were introduced to the concept of family literacy and the procedures were explained. They then translated the questionnaires into their own languages, so that they could be certain that they were all asking the same questions and the right questions. A day and a half of the workshop was then spent on role-plays with one person interviewing another taking notes, and the others playing the roles of parents, teachers, or learners.

As a result of the discussions at the workshop, the translations and the role-plays, the questionnaires were further revised before being printed in their final form.

Role play at the workshop

The sample schools and communities

The schools

The regions were asked to use schools for this study which were remote or disadvantaged in some way. Thus nine out of the thirteen schools which were used for the collection of data were rural schools, three were urban and one was peri-urban. The urban schools were located in informal townships or in deprived areas. All except one school used the local language as the medium of instruction, and class sizes ranged from seven in the Kavango Region to sixty in the Hardap Region.

The teachers

48 teachers and principals were interviewed. Of these 18 were male and 30 female. Of the thirteen principals 10 were male and three were female. Three of the teachers were teaching combined grades.

The learners

229 learners were interviewed, 124 boys and 105 girls. Their ages ranged from 6 to 16. The ages of the Grade One learners were between 6 and 12, Grade Two between 7 and 13, and Grade Three between 7 and 16. The majority of the Grade One learners, however, were between 6 and 8 years old, the majority of Grade Two learners between 7 and 9, and the majority of Grade Three learners between 9 and 11.

Information from the learners on whether they were living with their parents or not was incomplete, but of the 155 for whom information is available, 91 or 58.7% were living with one or both parents, 51 or 32.9% were living with one or more grandparents, 9 or 5.8% were living with an aunt or uncle, and 4 or 3.2% were living with a sibling.

The majority of the learners were living in traditional houses or homesteads in rural areas or shacks in urban areas. Only in the Kunene and Karas Regions, where the schools were situated in urban areas, were the majority living in brick houses.

The learners' homes

89 parents or care providers were interviewed in 78 homes. 68 were female and 21 male. 50 or 56.2% were parents and 27 or 30.3% were grandparents. The others were aunts (6), sisters (3), an uncle, a foster mother and a care parent. In 16 of the homes the care providers were unemployed.

Details of media and print available in the homes were given for 62 homes. Of these 62 homes, fifty or 80.1% had radios, though in one home the radio had no batteries. Nine homes or 14.5% had televisions, but only three homes had cell phones.

In 32 homes it was indicated that there were no books or printed materials of any sort. The most common types of printed materials available in the other homes were the Bible and other religious books, which were indicated as being present in 15 homes. Newspapers were only reported to have been present in four homes and only two had storybooks or children's books. Other books in some homes included literacy books, health booklets, the telephone directory, the constitution and magazines.

Analysis of the results

Data was analysed according to educational regions in Namibia. Interview data were analysed for recurring themes using the constant comparison approach, while quantitative data from the interview were analysed using SPSS 11.0.

Support from parents for children entering Grade 1

Only the principal and teachers were asked questions relating to this theme, as it was felt that only they would be able to assess what knowledge skills or attitudes were needed by the children before they came into Grade One. These questions relate, though, to the question asked of learners about the problems they had at school, as the parents could prepare their children to deal with the problems.

The first questions dealt with the problems faced by children entering Grade One and how the parents can help solve these problems. The responses are shown in Table 1. The major problem mentioned in 12 out of the 13 regions was the children's shyness, lack of confidence and, in some cases, even fear. During the pre-test in a Rehoboth school, the researchers were told that parents use the threat of school to discipline their pre-school children, as in "You won't get away with that when you go to school." Consequently the children are often crying when they come to school, so the parents take them outside and beat them to make them stop crying. The second most common problem, recorded in 9 out of the 13 regions, is that the children have not been to pre-school or kindergarten. In all the regions, the majority of children had not attended pre-school, and the teachers and principals thought that this was the most effective means of preparing the children for Grade One.

Table 1 — Principals and teachers responses Questions 1 – 1a

No	Questions and responses Principals and teachers	Number of regions	Per cent
1	**What problems do children experience when they start school?**		
	a. lack of confidence/ shyness/fear	12	92.3
	b. lack of parental support	2	15.4
	c. lack of kindergarten/pre-school experience	9	69.2
	d. basic counting/reading skills	1	7.7
	e. distance to school too long	4	30.8
	f. not know how to hold pencil	2	15.4
	g. not know hygiene (how to clean themselves or use a toilet)	2	15.4
	h. lack of food	2	15.4
1a	**How can parents assist in solving these problems?**		
	a. teach them to read and write	6	46.2
	b. escort children to school	2	15.4
	c. give them pre-school education	8	61.5
	d. prepare children for school	3	23.1
	e. teach them hygiene	1	7.7
	f. teach them simple things like craft with clay	1	7.7
	g. teach them to write their names	1	7.7
	h. teacher children to hold a pencil	2	15.4
	i. accompany children to school on the first day	1	7.7

The second set of questions asked concerned the skills, knowledge and attitudes which the teachers expected the children to have on entering Grade One. The answers are shown in Table 2. The most common skills expected were reading and writing their names (10/13) and interpersonal skills (7/13). The most common knowledge wanted was how to speak and communicate (8/13), with one region expecting children to know their colours and numbers, and two expecting children to know how to read and write. The attitudes required most were for the children to love school (12/13) and to be self-disciplined (9/13).

Table 2   Principals and teachers responses Questions 2 – 4

No	Questions and responses Principals and teachers	Number of regions	Per cent
2	**What would you like children to be able to do when they start school?**		
	a. read and write their names	10	76.9
	b. physical coordination, including motor skills	4	30.8
	c. know about hygiene	2	15.4
	d. interact with others, social behaviour, interpersonal skills	7	53.8
	e. speak in the mother tongue	1	7.7
	f. know the names of parents, brothers and sisters	2	15.4
	g. listen and understand instructions	1	7.7
	h. draw, sing and tell stories	1	7.7
	i. do some basic crafts	1	7.7
	j. draw pictures	1	7.7
	k. hold a pencil	3	23.1
3	**What would you like children to know when they come to school**		
	a. how to work with others	5	38.5
	b. read and write	2	15.4
	c. how to speak and communicate	8	61.5
	d. be disciplined	2	15.4
	e. how to count (1 – 10)	2	15.4
	f. shapes and colours	3	23.1
	g. know the letters of the alphabet and their sounds	2	15.4
4	**What attitudes would you like the children to have towards school?**		
	a. love for school	12	92.3
	b. interact with others	3	23.1
	c. self discipline	9	69.2
	d. respect for teachers	1	7.7
	e. confidence	1	7.7

The next three questions asked teachers how the parents could assist and whether they did assist. The results are shown in Table 3. The most common expectations of the teachers and principals were that parents should send the children to pre-school and provide them with everything they need for school. There were more positive ideas about how the parents could improve their children's attitudes to school, such as teaching them to respect others, encouraging them to attend school, visiting the school to see how they are doing and developing a good relationship with the teachers. In the opinion of the majority of the teachers and principals only a few parents do this.

Table 3   Principals and teachers responses Questions 4b – 5a

No	Questions and responses Principals and teachers	Number of regions	Per cent
4b	**How can parents assist in improving their children's attitude towards school?**		
	a. teach them to respect others	5	38.5
	b. encourage them to attend school	5	38.5
	c. visit school to see how children are coping	4	30.8
	d. have a good relationship with the teachers	4	30.8
	e. help with school work	2	15.4
5	**How should parents prepare their children before they start school in Grade 1?**		
	a. send them to pre-school	9	69.2
	b. provide them with school needs	10	76.9
	c. help them to read and write	4	30.8
	d. train them on hygiene	1	7.7
	e. read them stories	1	7.7
	f. teach them numbers	1	7.7
	g. write their names	1	7.7
5a	**Do parents do this?**		
	a. Yes most	5	38.5
	b. Yes some but not all	1	7.7
	c. Yes only a few	7	53.8
	d. Not at all	1	7.7

These questions elicited some useful responses for what should be included in the Family Literacy programme. Some teachers were very clear as to what they expected children to be able to do when they entered Grade One and suggested a number of activities the parents could do with their children. Unless the policy of the Government changes soon, it is unlikely that pre-schooling will be available for the majority of children in the foreseeable future. It will therefore be up to the parents to prepare their children to enter school in Grade One.

How do parents assist learners with their schoolwork?

Principals, teachers, parents and learners answered similar questions on how parents actually help the learners and how they would like parents to help. The answers given were very similar, though the principals and teachers expected much more help from the parents than they were giving.

The responses of the principals and teachers are listed in Table 4. Responses from 8/13 of the regions indicated that the parents do help with homework, and only in 6/13 regions did the teachers and principals say that parents do not help. In Table 5, which gives the responses from learners, 100% said that their parents helped them with their homework and none said they did not. When questioned themselves (Table 6, question 1), parents in 11/13 regions said that they helped their children with their homework, and only in 6/13 regions did they say they did not help because they were illiterate. According to the learners in question 1a in Table 5, the majority of them get help from their parents with their homework and with reading and writing. Some parents check the schoolwork and in one region the parents help with counting as well as reading and writing.

The teachers were unanimous about how the parents should prepare their children for school every day (Table 4 question 6b). They should wake them up, wash and dress them and give them food. One response, which occurred in both question 6a and question 7a, was that parents should visit the school to check on the progress of their children. Teachers in 9/13 regions suggested this when asked how they would like parents to support their work, but only in one region did the parents indicate a wish to visit the school to monitor the progress of their children. (Table 6 Question 2e)

Table 4   Principals and teachers responses Questions 6 – 7

No	Questions and responses Principals and teachers	Number of regions	Per cent
6	**In what ways do parents help their children with schoolwork?**		
	a. help with homework	8	61.5
	b. they do not help	6	46.2
	c. ask them about school	2	15.4
	d. provide school needs	1	7.7
	e. help with reading	1	7.7
6a	**In what ways would you like parents to help their children with their schoolwork?**		
	a. help them with homework	11	84.6
	b. prepare them for school	1	7.7
	c. visit school to find out progress of child	3	23.1
	d. prepare them for school (physical needs)	2	15.4
	e. create time for revision	1	7.7
6b	**How should parents prepare their children for school every day?**		
	a. wake them up, wash them and dress them	13	100
	b. prepare them for school	12	92.3
	c. provide food	13	100

No	Questions and responses Principals and teachers	Number of regions	Per cent
7	**How do parents support your work as teachers?**		
	a. attend parents' meetings	5	38.5
	b. discipline children at home	9	69.2
	c. help teach some topics	1	7.7
7a	**How would you like parents to support your work as a teacher?**		
	a. help teach some topics	2	15.4
	b. help with homework	5	38.5
	c. visit school to monitor progress	9	69.2
	d. cooperate with teachers	3	23.1

One way in which parents should be able to help their children is to provide a quiet place for them to do their homework. The learners were asked where they did their homework and whether it was quiet (Questions 4 and 4a in Table 5). Most learners indicated the sitting room or the bedroom, but in 7/13 regions they also said 'under a tree'. Only in one region did the learners stay at school and do their homework in a classroom. Most of the learners said that their place for studying was quiet, but learners in three regions said it was noisy.

Table 5   Learners responses Questions 1 – 4

No	Questions and responses Learners	Number of regions	Per cent
1	**Do your parents help you with your schoolwork?**		
	a. Yes	13	100
	b. No	0	0
1a	**How do they help you?**		
	a. with homework	9	69.2
	b. help with reading and writing	11	84.7
	c. checking schoolwork	3	23.1
	d. reading, writing and counting	1	7.7
	e. provide school needs	3	23.1
2	**Would you like your parents to help you with your schoolwork?**		
	a. Yes	13	100
	b. No	0	0
2a	**How would you like your parents to help you?**		
	a. reading, writing and counting	12	92.3
	b. homework	10	76.9
	c. give encouragement about school	2	15.4
	d. provide school needs	1	7.7
3	**Do you tell your parents about school?**		
	a. Yes	13	100
	b. No	0	0

No	Questions and responses Learners	Number of regions	Per cent
4	**Where do you do your homework?**		
	a. in the sitting room	11	84.6
	b. under a tree	7	53.8
	c. in my bedroom	8	61.5
	d. in class	1	7.7
4a	**Is it quiet?**		
	a. Yes	13	100
	b. No	3	23.1

In Table 5, question 3, we have seen that all the learners indicated that they told their parents about school, and this is supported by the parents' responses to question 3 in Table 6, where only in two regions did parents admit that they did not know what their children were learning at school and what was happening at school.

Table 6 Parents' responses Questions 1 - 5

No	Questions and responses Parents	Number of regions	Per cent
1	**In what ways do you help your child with schoolwork**		
	a. I am illiterate	6	46.2
	b. I provide school needs	5	38.5
	c. I help with homework	11	84.6
	d. a sibling helps with homework	2	15.4
2	**In what ways (or in what other ways) would you like to help your child?**		
	a. provide school needs	5	38.5
	b. give encouragement	4	30.8
	c. help with homework	6	46.2
	d. prepare child for school (physical)	0	0
	e. visit school to monitor progress of child	1	7.7
3	**Do you know what your child is learning at school?**		
	a. Yes	11	84.6
	b. No	2	15.4
4	**Does your child tell you what is happening in school?**		
	a. Yes	11	84.6
	b. No	2	15.4
5	**Do you talk to your child about school?**		
	a. Yes	13	100
	b. No	1	7.7

The parents' attitude to school

Both the parents and the teachers were asked about the parents' attitude to the school. In the principals and teachers' questionnaire respondents were asked not only what the parents' attitude to the schoolwork was but also whether they attended school meetings, on the assumption that attendance at school meetings indicated an interest in what was happening at school.

Table 7 Parents' responses Questions 6 – 8

No	Questions and responses Parents	Number of regions	Per cent
6	**What is your opinion of the school?**		
	a. a good place for education which will lead to a better life	13	100
	b. negative attitude	0	0
7	**Do you attend school meetings?**		
	a. Yes	12	92.3
	b. Yes, sometimes	0	0
	c. No	3	23.1
7a	**If not, why not?**		
	a. Other responsibility	4	30.8
	b. I am busy	1	7.7
	c. No	1	7.7
	d. not invited by the school	1	7.7
8	**Do you think the school helps your child to behave well?**		
	a. Yes, it changes, moulds their behaviour	13	100
	b. It teachers them hygiene	1	7.7
	a. Yes most	5	38.5
	b. Yes some but not all	1	7.7
	c. Yes only a few	7	53.8
	d. Not at all	1	7.7

Table 8 Principals and teachers' responses Questions 8 – 9a

No	Questions and responses Principals and teachers' responses	Number of regions	Per cent
8	**What is the parents; attitude to the children's' schoolwork?**		
	a. negative attitude	7	53.8
	b. positive attitude to the education of their children	3	23.1
	c. They do not know the value of education	2	15.4
	d. Everything is left to the teachers	4	30.8
8a	**Why do they have this attitude?**		
	a. They do not care	1	7.7

No	Questions and responses Principals and teachers' responses	Number of regions	Per cent
	b. They are not educated/illiterate	5	38.5
	c. They do not know the value of education	5	38.5
	d. They understand the value of education	3	23.1
8b	(If it is negative) how could this attitude be improved?		
	a. attend more meetings	2	15.4
	b. visit school more regularly	2	15.4
	c. attend/join literacy classes	3	23.1
	d. explain their roles to them	8	61.5
9	Do parents attend school meetings?		
	a. Yes, most do	5	38.5
	b. Yes, a few	4	30.8
	c. No	1	7.7
9a	Why do you think parents attend or do not attend?		
	a. They are not educated/illiterate	3	23.1
	b. They do not think it is their responsibility	7	53.8
	c. too busy	1	7.7

As you can see from Tables 7 and 8, there is a big difference between the very positive attitude the parents say they have towards the school and the negative attitude that the teachers think is held by the parents. Only in 5 regions did teachers say that most of the parents attended meetings (Table 8, question 9), but in Table 7, question 7, parents in only 3 regions admitted that they did not attend meetings. A possible explanation for this discrepancy is that the parents selected by the principal for interviewing were those who were best known to the school because they attended meetings, etc.

The learners' attitude to school

A further set of questions asked the learners about their attitude to school. This gave rise to answers which do not relate to the sort of responses given by the parents, so have been put in a separate section of the report. Perhaps also they do not give much guidance to the Family Literacy programme, but they are recorded here as an informative comment on the learners' attitudes to school. It is noticeable that corporal punishment is still prevalent in schools, being cited as a problem or not liked in six of the schools used in the research (Table 9, responses 6d and 7a).

Table 9 Learners' responses on their attitude to school

No	Questions and responses Learners' responses	Number of regions	Per cent
5	What do you like about school?		
	a. reading, writing and counting	13	100
	b. singing	0	0

No	Questions and responses / Learners' responses	Number of regions	Per cent
	c. playing with friends	4	30.8
6	**What do you not like about school?**		
	a. fighting and breaking things	12	92.3
	b. bullying	8	61.5
	c. noisemaking	7	53.8
	d. corporal punishment	4	30.8
7	**Do you have any problems at school?**		
	a. corporal punishment	3	23.1
	b. fighting and swearing	6	46.2
	c. no problems	2	15.4
	d. noisemaking	5	38.5
	e. long distance to school	1	7.7

Activities done by parents and children

Both the learners and their parents were asked what the children did in their spare time and what sort of activities they worked on together. There was almost complete correlation between their responses. Only in one region did the parents say that they spent no time with their children at all (Table 10, question 9). Most parents said that they spent a lot of time with their children, but the majority spend that time doing household chores. In 10/13 regions, parents said they did household chores with their children (Table 10, question 10), while in 12/13 regions the children made the same statement (Table 11, question 8). Both parents and children said that they spent time together doing homework, but very few parents or children said that they spent time talking together.

Both parents and children agreed in 13/13 regions that the parents told the children stories (Table 10, question 11 and Table 11, question 8a). The types of stories mentioned were folk tales, traditional stories and Bible stories.

Only in one region did the parents admit to not having any books or magazines in the house (Table 10, question 12), whereas no learners admitted that there were no books in their house (Table 11, question 9). Nearly all the books are in the local languages, with very few learners having access to books in English (Table 11, question 9a). The one book that appears in all households is the Bible, but in more than 50% of the regions, parents also had literacy books and newspapers or magazines (Table 10, question 12a).

In 11/13 regions the parents said that they read the books they had to their children, while in 3/13 regions parents could not read because they were illiterate (Table 10, question 14)

The question concerning what the children watch on the television or listen to on the radio needs further analysis to find out what sort of programmes they have access to or like.

Table 10   Parents' responses on activities with children

No	Questions and responses Parents' responses	Number of regions	Per cent
9	**How much time do you spend with your child each day?**		
	a. a lot of time	10	76.9
	b. some time	6	46.2
	c. no time	1	7.7
10	**What do you do?**		
	a. talking	1	7.7
	b. household chores	10	76.9
	c. help with homework	9	69.2
	d. ploughing the field	1	7.7
	e. give encouragement about school	3	23.1
	f. teach morals and manners	2	15.4
11	**Do you tell your child stories?**		
	a. Yes. Folk/traditional/Bible stories	13	100
	b. No	3	23.1
12	**Do you have any books or magazines in the house?**		
	a. Yes	12	92.3
	b. No	1	7.7
12a	**What books are they?**		
	a. story books	1	7.7
	b. Bible	13	100
	c. literacy books	7	53.8
	d. magazines, newspapers	7	53.8
	e. school books	1	7.7
13	**Can your child read them?**		
	a. Yes	8	61.5
	b. No	7	53.8
14	**Do you read them to your child?**		
	a. Yes	11	84.6
	b. No, I am illiterate	3	23.1

Table 11   Learners' responses about out of school activities

No	Questions and responses / Learners' responses	Number of regions	Per cent
8	**What sort of things do you do with your parents?**		
	a. domestic chores	12	92.3
	b. playing	3	23.1
	c. chatting with parents	1	7.7
	d. watching TV and listening to the radio	3	23.1
	e. homework	4	30.8
8a	**Do your parents tell you stories?**		
	a. Yes, folk tales/traditional/Bible stories	13	100
	b. No	0	0
9	**Are there any reading books, newspapers or magazines in the house?**		
	a. Yes	13	100
	b. No	0	0
9a	**What languages are they in?**		
	a. local language	12	92.3
	b. English	2	15.4
9b	**Can you read these books?**		
	a. Yes	10	76.4
	b. No	2	15.4
10	**What do you do when you are not in school?**		
	a. herding cattle	6	46.2
	b. domestic chores	11	84.6
	c. playing	6	46.2
	d. sleeping	4	30.8
	e. homework	2	15.4
	f. reading	1	7.7
11	**Do you listen to the radio or watch television?**		
	a. Yes, soapies	11	84.6
	b. Yes, news	11	84.6

Some extracts from the regional reports

Data collectors were asked to write a summary report for the school they visited commenting on the following:

1. Level of community resources, or other literacy/educational programmes in the region
2. Environment of school and parents' homes in general, e.g. how much incidental reading, signs, logos of cars, prices in shops, billboards, street names, etc.
3. Telephones in the community, other means of communication.
4. Human capacity in the community. Who are the resourceful people? Pastors? Teachers? Volunteers? Who could potentially deliver a family literacy programme?

5. What should be incorporated in a family literacy programme in your particular region?

The following are extracts from the regional reports responding to these questions.

Caprivi

On Monday 9th August we managed to inform the school principal, the area headman and the Cincimani Tribal Authority under whose jurisdiction the research was to take place.

There is only one gravel road leading to the school and it is far from most of the villages within the area. There are no billboards or signboards which give direction to the school or to other villages. The school is situated about 200 metres from the road. The nearest village is about 600 metres to the east of the school. The furthest village is about 8 km to the west. The school is not central so children have to cover some kilometres to come to school.

Interactions

Interaction among teachers and the principal is positive and they work together as a team. The main reason is that the principal is also doing class teaching. Secondly the principal would in most cases sit together with the teachers in the staff-room during which communication takes place daily. In the case of learners and teachers, it was very difficult to observe any interaction, as the learners were busy writing the August exams at the time of the research.

As for the interaction among community members, it was difficult to observe as most villages are scattered and are a distance from each other. With regard to the interaction between the community members and the school, we would say that this did not take place because there was no community member who was observed coming to school. We attributed this to the fact that the teachers are not staying at school but commute from town every Monday to Friday. Some community members who came to the school were only seeking transport to travel to town, and not for the purpose of supporting the school. In all the villages where we went, the community members were busy socialising together through group discussions, threshing maize and helping one another to put their grain into the bags for market.

The school and the community environment

The school was established in 1981. It has a principal with 2 male teachers, one female teacher and a school secretary.

There are posters pasted on the walls in the staff room and classrooms for learners to read at the school. This enables and encourages learners to practise reading and identify letters and syllables. There is no telephone at the school or in the villages where the school is situated. Communication is done through the NBC radio by announcements, as the school principal keeps a small radio at the school. The school has a multi-grade for grades 2 and 3. The teachers for grades 1 and 2/3 seem not be

using the library which is at the school, as they were doubting whether there is a library or not when interviewed.

During the second day after he was interviewed, the principal drove 6 km to a certain village to find out why one learner could not sit for examination for the past week. We are of the opinion that this was brought about by the interview. The resourceful people in the area who could assist in the family literacy programme are the pastor and a teacher living in one village. There is no shopping area, except for a sole trader with a store situated about 4 km from the school. Each time we drove through the village, it was closed. There were a few beer tins and papers lying around in most villages.

There are no other adult education programmes taking place in the community. The interest for adult literacy is there but the villages which make up the Machita area are scattered with the result that the communities do not agree on a meeting place.

In conclusion we are of the opinion that other projects which should be incorporated in the Family Literacy programme are, for example, Adult skills for self-employment, with tailoring running alongside literacy classes. Thus adults will be trained to practise tailoring skills and at the same time learn literacy skills.

Oshikoto

The school
Antoni is the only school in the area ranged from Grade 1 to 6. Oshindonga language is the medium of instruction there. Something unique and interesting at Antoni Primary School is that in Grade 2, there are 16 learners aged from 6 to 8 years, but only three of them are girls. So men are dominant in class as well. There is a literacy centre which was established two years ago. Most of the adults, men and women, are illiterate but only a few people attend literacy classes.

The environment of the school is good because there is one brick building consisting of four classrooms and another building for toilets without portable water. There is no tap water or electricity. The cleaner (lady) is the one to fetch water from the borehole for cleaning the school. The schoolyard is well fenced.

The school is one of the schools under the Namibian School Food Programme of MBESC that provides maize meal to schools. The school management has requested the parents in the area to come to prepare thin porridge for the learners every day. Parents are asked in turn to come to fetch water and wood to prepare the porridge in a big pot. One parent prepares and serves the whole school every day in the morning during the learners' first break.

The community
Antoni is a typical remote area with a high population. Oshikwanyama is the language spoken most at home. There are more men than women in the area. There are many commercial farms (cattle posts) in the area owned by businessmen and individuals from urban areas. The reason there are more men than women is that men came to look after the cattle in the area and some women followed their husbands.

There is no clinic or church in the vicinity. A mobile team of two nurses travel from Oshivelo on day a month. There is a gravel road from the main Tsumeb – Ondangwa tarred road. There is one common borehole that operates on a generator – machine and its water tastes salty. Both human beings and animals depend on that salty water.

The parents' homesteads are built in the traditional Oshiwambo way. Most of the people are unemployed and there are many elderly people who would qualify for the government pension scheme but do not have identity documents. Many people live in poor living conditions. Most of the children go to school barefoot and only some children have school uniforms.

The inhabitants of Antoni rural depend only on mahangu and milk as staple food because mahangu is abundant there. One notices that they produce a lot of mahangu and one wonders whether they use it as a cash crop or only for consumption. Only a few people own a few goats or cattle because they are mostly looking after someone else's livestock.

Both men and women wear ragged clothes. There is no shop in the area but a few cuca shops are selling the traditional brew, tombo, which people drink every day. Only a few cars could be seen moving around belonging to those from the urban areas who owned cattle posts in the area. There is no means of communication in terms of telephone and postal services. However, the interviewers saw a cell phone and an old unused parked car in one homestead. There are also white plastic chairs in that homestead. Generally Antoni area lags behind in development in terms of human resources and facilities.

In our opinion we felt that the constituency councillor, grade 10 or 12 graduates, kindergarten teachers, literacy promoters, retired teachers and headmen are the people with the most potential to deliver the family literacy programme, not only in Antoni but also in the region as a whole.

The family literacy programme should be incorporated into community-based programmes such as Kindergarten, Crèche, Orphans and Vulnerable children care of the MoHSS in conjunction with the MBESC.

All in all the family literacy programme is much needed in the region because, based on our observation, both parents and teachers interviewed, showed interest and they were eager and cooperative in responding to our questions during the interview sessions.

Rundu

About 30 learners, mostly younger ones come from their homes every day and about 70 reside on the school premises and sleep in two structures built by CCN before independence as classrooms. The structures consists of zinc both the roof and the surrounding. When new classes were built after independence, these structures were turned into accommodation rooms for learners who come from villages that surround Mukekete village. These learners cannot walk to and from school on a daily basis because their homes are as far as 4-15 kilometres from Mukekete Senior Primary School. The furthest village is Wiwi about 15 Km while the nearest is Mpoto

Mukukutu about 4 km. These learners come to Mukekete because there are no schools at their villages. Thus, the community together with the teachers allowed them to sleep on the school premises.

The school is one of the beneficiaries of the school feeding project of the Ministry of Basic Education, Sports and Culture, which supply maize meal to make soft porridge for lower primary learners, especially those learners who are from parents who cannot afford breakfast for their children. As a result, every child, including those in the upper primary phase, benefits from it. However, parents contribute as well in the form of mahangu meal and labour by preparing meals for children at school free of charge, especially those parents who live in the surrounding of the school.

Since the school is not electrified and properly fenced, the safety and hygiene of these children are compromised based on the following reasons:
> There are no security guards that guard the school and children
> Children are overcrowded in the rooms (about 40 learners in a room)
> Children sleep on the floor without mattresses

We learnt from the principal through informal discussion that last year three girls were raped and the culprits are still in prison. The principal rightly pointed out that "any time anything can happen to these children for as long as the Ministry does not consider building a hostel or building schools at the villages where these children come from."

The nearest hospital/clinic is about 25km away at Mpungu Health Centre. The principal is the only person with a vehicle in the village and sometimes he is forced to take not only children, but also community members, to the hospital during the day and night. Other means of transport available at the village are horses and donkeys.

Among the 100 learners the school has, 10 of them are San people. Two of these children were interviewed as one of them is in grade 1 and the other one in grade 2.The rest are among the higher grades (Gr.4-7). The Rukwangali proficiency of these learners is excellent; hence we did not experience problems with them during the interview.

Interview with learners

Almost 40 % indicated that they do not get any assistance from their parents. About 60% responded that they do get help from their parents, elder brothers and sisters as well as grandmothers. Learners from San background do not get any assistance at all. From those interviewed, none reside on the school premises.

Interview with parents

In contrast to 60% of children who responded that they get assistance from their parents, 50% of the parents indicated that they do not help their children with schoolwork, as they are illiterate. Another 50% responded that they help their children with their schoolwork.

Interview with teachers

According to their responses, parents do not assist their children with their homework (see question 6 on teacher's questionnaire) and the children's problems in grade 1 range from not being able to say their names and their parents' names to not being able to hold a pen, read and write, especially with grade 3.

General observation on the environment and in the community

Though homes are very sparsely distributed (about 500 meters to 1 kilometre), we were informed by the Headman that Mukekete village has got approximately 25 homes including the camps of the San people. The population ranges from 500 to 1500 people who are mainly subsistence farmers. The community comprises people with different backgrounds. There are people with the Vakwangali, San, and Vambadja (one of the tribe in the former Owamboland and in southern Angola) backgrounds. However, all the people understand and speak Rukwangali very well.

There is only one cuca shop, which satisfies the needs of the community. Prices of goods are displayed at the edges of shelves behind the counter in the shop. Apart from hymn books and Bibles, which members of the community own, and the displayed prices of goods in the shop, evidence of literacy of some members of the community is further supported by a couple of vehicle number plates displayed along the main road and pages of magazines and newspapers, and the Namibian flag flying around in home yards as well as at the water point.

The unfortunate place without evidence of literacy was the surrounding of the camps of the San people. The only materials found at this place were empty bottles and tins of fish and cool drinks. Above all, we learnt through informal talks with four San families that most of San people who grew up in camps do not know how to read and write except those who grew up and stay with black people as they had chances to go to school when they were children.

Recommendations

In our opinion, this school is suitable for this project due to the following reasons:
- The village does not have a literacy centre; hence the illiteracy level is so high, especially among the San community. The community had literacy classes in 1993-1995, 1997-1999 but then lost interest. Our record shows that the San people did not take part in any literacy activities. Therefore, the San children will benefit from this programme. The reintroduction of literacy classes to the village will be to the advantage of the parents, as they will acquire knowledge and skills that will enable them to help their children.
- There are few reading materials in the possession of the community members that can increase their literacy and through the process assist their children with their work. The introduction of the family literacy programme to this village will be an opportunity for parents to learn how they can help their children with their schoolwork.
- The school feeding programme that supports the children with food lays a foundation for the programme to succeed as most parents expressed their

appreciation for this gesture from the government and they are willing to meet the government half way by supporting their children with their education.

The performance of schools will improve if all stakeholders in education work together as a team for one common goal. Thus, the introduction of the Family Literacy Programme to this village and region at large will open the eyes of most parents to play their role as partners in the education their children. The programme will further enable parents not only to identify activities that leads to their children's cognitive development but to realise that some of the things they do with their children develop their children cognitively and they will continue with them as they are important.

The responses of interviewees, particularly those of parents revealed that not all of them are aware that their obligation in assisting their children with their education does not end with physical support such as the provision of food and clothes only, but also extends to helping their children with homework as well. This programme is very important, as it will link formal education with non-formal education. Therefore, our communities, particularly those that are previously disadvantaged, should embrace it as it complements the education of both children and adults.

Conclusions

The main conclusion reached from the study is that there is a vital role for a family literacy programme in improving the performance of learners in the lower primary grades. All persons involved in the survey and all those interviewed were very much in favour of such a programme and wanted it to start as soon as possible.

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Exploring the link between literacy, community participation and poverty alleviation in Botswana

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Abstract

This paper explores and establishes a firm link between critical social issues of literacy and community participation, and how they could impact upon poverty reduction strategies in Botswana. It argues that while Botswana is renowned for its economic success, poverty and unemployment are rampant, especially among the youth and in the rural areas. The paper demonstrates that in spite of poverty being officially attributed to structural and physical factors such as drought and low population, it can be alleviated through providing empowering literacy experiences and facilitating community participation. It critiques the current literacy delivery and suggests how it can be remodelled to bring about community participation, which in turn could help in poverty reduction. The paper suggests that people should be engaged in formulating and implementing poverty alleviation strategies to enhance community ownership of such projects, Literacy education should involve learners in democratic decision making in all aspects of programme development, communities should be assisted to establish community based development projects though the use of participatory strategies such as Participatory Rural Appraisal, and literacy issues should be infused in all poverty alleviation projects.

Introduction

The provision of literacy has increasingly became a national imperative as more and more children leave schools without having acquired the essential functional skills needed for survival in their contexts. Adult literacy has long been recognized as a human right and as necessary for people to participate in development. The World Education Forum and its *Dakar Framework for Action* (2000) called on the international community to make a commitment to meet the educational needs of children, youth and adults. The fourth goal of the framework implores the world to achieve a 50 percent improvement in the level of adult literacy by 2015, especially for women, and equitable access to basic and continuing education for all adults (Torres, 2004). By setting the tempo for the planning and implementation of literacy education and recognizing that beyond schooling literacy can and should be provided by families and institutions such as civic societies and community and Non-Governmental Organizations, the Dakar framework not only reactivated the Jomtien 1990 Education For All goals, but also expanded the agenda for adult learning within the EFA platform. As Torres (2004) observes, "EFA has been ratified as the overarching international platform for basic education in the South until 2015," (p. 82). Informed by this background, this paper argues that in spite of its relative economic success and political stability, the majority of Botswana's citizens, especially women and those in rural areas live in poverty. It conceptualizes both poverty and literacy to demonstrate the magnitude and manifestation of poverty and illustrates that literacy education as presently organized is heavily centralized and can not effectively facilitate community participation. It draws from critical educational

theory to demonstrate the potential of literacy to facilitate community participation. Consequently, it suggests that there is a need to decentralize literacy education planning, commitment to deliberative democracy and the use of participatory approaches such as the REFLECT approach to bring about an enhanced level of commitment to community participation and poverty reduction.

Conceptualization and Contextualization of Poverty in Botswana

Poverty tends to fall more heavily on certain groups than others. As will be illustrated below, in Botswana it is largely a rural and feminized phenomenon. Women generally are disadvantaged in poor households, often shoulder more of the workload than men, are less educated and have less access to remunerative opportunities (Republic of Botswana, 2004). Poverty is difficult to define categorically because it is a socio-political, economic and capacity construct. Its conception is context specific and depends on both the mode of production and social organization. In addition to income variables there are also some social and capacity aspects, which make poverty multi-dimensional (Alock, 1993; Sen, 1999). Forms of poverty include absolute or subsistence poverty, relative poverty, and lack of capacity poverty.

Absolute or Subsistence Poverty

Absolute poverty denotes a situation where the property owned and controlled by an individual or members of a community does not ensure that the person(s) can meet their basic needs in the form of housing, food, clothing, shelter and medical facilities (Okech-Owiti, 1993). These persons lack what they need to survive as human beings on a day to day basis (Alock, 1993).

Relative Poverty

Poverty could also be viewed as a social rather than an individual phenomenon, hence it is relative. Relative poverty indicates the amount of property owned and controlled [by individuals and communities] relative to what society owns and controls (Okech-Owiti, 1993, p. 11). This type of poverty is governed by the social and institutional structures and not only by the amount of disposable income individuals have at their disposal. The calculations of relative poverty are based on reported income from household surveys. The problem is that it does not provide income per head, which may be more unevenly distributed than income per household. Marc-Henry observes "we are ignorant of the variations in consumption around the poverty line and we leave out the diversity of individuals and social institutions by a common threshold" (1993 p. 31).

Lack of Capability Poverty

The concept of lack of capacity poverty was pioneered by Amartya Sen. Poverty articulation has been based solely on economic formulas ignored the fact that people suffer capacity poverty if they are unable to engage in what makes their lives valuable. This is called the capability approach to measuring human development or

lack thereof. It assumes that people should have freedom to enjoy their valuable beings and doings. Good life involves genuine choice, not the one where persons are forced by circumstances to live a certain life style. The capability approach would judge any policy or human undertaking to be successful if it enhances people's capabilities whether or not it offered income, growth, or other important means to these ends (Sen, 1999). To this extent, poverty can be tackled not only by giving people material handouts but expanding their freedom and choice, which they find valuable in their lives. This places literacy, which is a foundational human activity, and other forms of education at the centre of poverty reduction efforts in Botswana.

Botswana's Socio-Political Context

On gaining political independence from Britain in 1966, Botswana was classified as one of the poorest nations in the world. The colonizing regime had neglected all aspects of development infrastructure, especially education, which in the colonies was used to select a handful of male collaborators to assist the colonizers to conduct their business at a minimal human cost. It was characterized by a disdain for African indigenous knowledge and pretended that Africans had no education prior to colonialism (Egbo, 2000; Ntiri, 1998). Odara (1993) observed that the education was aimed at creating and guaranteeing class, racial, and gender differentiation and ensured that African women remained productive but structurally powerless. In Botswana, this situation resulted in a disproportionately high rate of illiteracy among women. Today, with approximately 1.7 million people, Botswana is frequently cited by international agencies as typically good in policy making and service delivery. For example, The 2003 Report of the United Nation Commission for Africa ranked Botswana number one in Africa for its expanded policy support index, macro policies, poverty reduction policies and institution building (Republic of Botswana, 2004). However, in spite of these praises, a substantial proportion of the population lives in rural areas, are very poor and survive on different types of subsistence agricultural activities. The main communities (tribes) are constituted by the powerful Tswana ethnic groups, but there are other minorities who speak 20 languages other than Setswana, which is the national language. Setswana and English are used in educational and official communication.

Politically, Botswana has steadfastly pursued a multiparty approach, resulting in about nine consecutive elections since independence. However, the ruling Botswana Democratic Party won all these elections, which renders the state a *de facto* one party system (Youngman, 2000). Another feature of governmental practice is the general reduction of popular participation and unprecedented concentration of power in the Office of the Presidency (Good, 1996). This has not presented opportunities for citizens to enhance their engagement in oppositional dialogue. Consequently, this socio-political docility allowed the state to shift from welfare state policies to neo-liberal free market capitalism. In the 1990s it reduced health and education expenditure on the pretext of cost-sharing and cost-recovery, resulting in increased youth unemployment, and rural and peri-urban poverty in spite of the country's economic success.

Poverty and Plenty in Botswana

Botswana's economy was one of the weakest in the world during the1960's but it has expanded rapidly reaching a GNP per capita of $3,700 by 1998 (World Bank, 2000). In the 1980s it recorded a phenomenal growth of 7.7 % in 1999/2000, which made it one of the fastest growing economies in the world (Ministry of Finance and Development Planning, 2002). The growth has been attributed to the discovery and exploitation of mineral wealth, especially diamonds. Unfortunately, it has not been accompanied by prudent diversification. The ruling bloc used the available surplus from mineral sales to maintain the standard of living of the lower classes, in particular the working class through annual increment of salaries. However, reservations have been expressed about the distributive capacity of the state, which left out certain sections of the society such as minorities, women and youth (Youngman, 1995).

This resulted in unacceptably high rates of income inequality and persistent poverty. For example, the Household Income and Expenditure Survey of 1993/94 showed that poverty was more prevalent in rural areas, where 60% of the poor and 70% of the very poor female households live. About 55% of the rural population lived below the poverty datum line in the rural areas compared to 46% in urban villages and 29% in urban areas. On average, male headed households earned two and half times more than female headed households (Ministry of Finance and Development Planning, 1998). The continued existence of poverty has recently been acknowledged by the latest Household Income and Expenditure Survey 2002/03, which noted that while in 1994, 47% of the population lived below poverty datum line, the figure has reduced to 30.3% in by 2003. Poverty has a gender dimension: in 1993, 50% of female headed house holds were poor compared to 46% for male headed households, which was a reduction from 60% and 58% in 1985 (Central Statistics Office, 2005).

Government attributes poverty to structural bottle necks, such as a small population, a narrow economic base, poor natural resource endowment and poor poverty alleviation strategies (Republic of Botswana, 2004). The persistence of poverty in the midst of plenty constitutes an obvious contradiction between the United Nations' rating of Botswana as number one in Africa in terms of human development index and its grounded realities. Resources such a tourism and the cattle industry are not maximally exploited to alleviate poverty. What is being experienced is a dilemma of "poverty in the midst of plenty." For example, data suggest that the urban population has more access to resources and facilities. However, a closer analysis of the urban population distinguishes between urban and peri-urban populations. The people who live in the peri-urban slums are afflicted by the worst form of poverty, which renders them destitute in the midst of plenty in the urban suburbs. These are people who came into the urban areas without any skills hoping to find employment, and are therefore victims of "city lights syndrome" (Odotei, 1995). These are perfect candidates for transformative literacy programs intended to alleviate poverty and enhance community participation in Botswana. Consequently, social services such as literacy can promote ways to redress these inequalities depending on how they are conceptualized and implemented.

Conceptualization and Provision of Literacy Education in Botswana

Literacy can usefully be conceptualised in terms of conventional and transformative approaches. Conventional literacy provision proceeds from the assumption that nation states can and should plan development change, and often equates growth with efficiency. In this approach, programs are centrally developed and though stated as a goal, literacy is not treated urgently. The curriculum is carefully defined in terms of prescribing what is to be taught and the methods and materials to be used (Weber, 1999). The program is carried out in accordance with the demands for social accountability, and assumed needs of individuals and the nation (Hearth, 1999). The goal of the state is to use literacy to facilitate orderly personal and national development, which permits the state to meet often bureaucratically defined goals of society. Literacy depends on the will of the state and expertise of curriculum developers (Gee, 1996).

The assumption is that individual concerns are reconciled with national goals (Wagner, 1999). Gough (1995) indicates that literacy contributes to personal improvement and mobility, social progress, better health, and cognitive development. In his view texts have independent meanings and readers can be separated from the society that gives meaning to what they read. The irony of the above argument is that it ignores the fact that decisions on what aspects of popular knowledge can be part of the official curriculum are political (Apple, 1999). While conventional programs start with systematically defined needs of learners, their goals are often not transformative (Tollefson, 1994). This approach contrasts with transformative literacy intended to engage learners in social action (Giroux, 1995).

Foley (1999) challenges literacy providers to recognize that learning as an aspect of human life occurs in many forms since it is life long, and education is shaped by political forces beyond the participant's immediate control. Transformative learning is a possibility but it is contested and needs providers to act strategically. Participants are to critique 'discourse maps' of society in order to transform it (Gee, 1996; Posner, 1998). This approach assumes that literacy should empower learners, raise their consciousness, and help them take control of their lives through learning (Apple, 1999; McLaren, 1995). Transformative literacy often adopts a campaign approach since often the state needs to foster transition after a revolutionary war. Bhola (1999) observes that states treat campaigns as a priority undertaking. Lind and Johnston (1996) argue that with decolonization, literacy came to be seen by the state as a tool in economic growth, and an instrument for empowerment. Transformative literacy uses multiple languages and consultative strategies. For instance, in Tanzania, the program was built into the cultural life of the people through the use of locally relevant materials. The state established links with the people through performance arts and crafts (Rassool, 1999). Setting priorities in such countries emphasizes empowerment of individuals in the context of community. These different conceptions of literacy have implications for how literacy is planned in different countries. As demonstrated below, the Botswana National Literacy Program (BNLP) is a conventional literacy program.

The Botswana National Literacy Program

Established in 1980, the original major objective of the national literacy program was to enable 250,000 illiterate men, women and youth to become literate in Setswana and

numerate over six years from l980-85. It also stipulated that literacy was to be understood in the context of development issues relevant to the respective districts and nation. Finally, it was decided that literacy was "to be interpreted to imply that a person can comprehend those written communications and simple computations which are part of their daily life" (Ministry of Education (1979, p. 1). This rather narrow conception of literacy excluded literacy in other languages, which meant that the state failed to determine the need for literacy to respond to varied needs in the population. However, in 1985 the state redefined the objectives of the program to address the perceived schooling needs of children in remote communities. They introduced an opportunity for children to attend adult literacy classes and adult learners to acquire practical skills required for income generating activities (Ministry of Finance and Development Planning, 1985).

In 1987, the BNLP was evaluated and the evaluation recommended that the primers, which are the primary source of the curriculum, be revised and that efforts should be made to determine the effects of the programme on the lives of the learners (Gaborone, Mutanyatta & Youngman, 1987). However, the evaluation fell short of demonstrating how learners applied the acquired skills in their districts and the nation as stipulated above in the programme's objectives.

In 1994, the Government published the findings of the Second National Commission on Education. The report had a chapter devoted to Out-of-School Education with specific recommendations for the Department of Non-Formal- Education (DNFE). Among other recommendations it mandated the DNFE to provide education for Out-of-School Children in both urban and rural areas, review the terms and conditions of service for literacy teachers, commission a national evaluation of the literacy programme, and set up an adult basic education course equivalent to Standard Seven in primary school (Ministry of Education, 1993). These recommendations have not yet been implemented.

In 1993, the state conducted a national household literacy survey, which revealed that currently the overall literacy rate is 68.9%, with 66.9% for men and 70.3% for women (Ministry of Finance and Development Planning, 1998). The survey showed that only 12% of the participants reported acquiring literacy through the Botswana National Literacy Program and the survey indicated that the BNLP was not reaching 81% of the eligible population it is supposed to serve (Ministry of Finance and Development Planning, 1998). The 2003 survey indicated a national literacy rate of 81% compared to 68.9% in 1993. The literate population among those with less than five years of education or who never attended both formal and non-formal school was determined by computing their mean score in English and Setswana reading, writing and oral tests as well as numeracy. Mean scores for only those who took all the tests were computed. Only 3% of the eligible population took the tests. Measurement of performance in literacy tests increased the national literacy rate by only 1.6 %. Also data indicated that 71.5% of the eligible population never attended adult literacy classes compared to 81% in 1993. Major reasons advanced for non-attendance were that people were either not interested, or there were no facilities in the area, or they did not know the literacy classes existed, or they did not have time to attend. These were also the main reasons advanced for non attendance in the 1993 survey. At the time of the survey only 5.7% of people eligible for literacy were still attending, while 22.9% had left the program (Chilisa, Maruatona, Nenty &Tsheko, 2005). These

figures indicate a low level of achievement for a program that has been in operation since 1980.

Low national performance in literacy delivery could also be attributed to the centralized nature of the program. The organizational structures of the DNFE are hierarchical and heavily centralized, leaving limited opportunity for local innovations (Maruatona, 2001; Mpofu & Youngman, 2001). As Mpofu and Youngman (2001) note, "it provides a standardized national framework in which there is little discretion at district level, for example, the budget is controlled from the headquarters" (p. 582). However, recently, six positions of Regional Adult Education Officer (RAEO) were introduced. These officers oversee the activities of district adult education officers and junior staff in their respective regions. At district level, the department has various cadres ranging from the Literacy Group Leaders (LGLs), who are volunteer teachers, through Adult Education Assistants to District Adult Education Officers (DAEOs) and Senior District Adult Education Officers (SDAEOs) who supervise districts and sub-districts throughout the country. Country wide, there are fifteen DEAOs under the five RAEOs. In 1997, the Department had 948 LGLs and 132 adult education officers and they oversaw 1,640 literacy groups (DNFE, 1998). The introduction of RAEOs was intended to enhance the capacity of the program to effectively serve learners from different geographical regions. However, in spite of having a seemingly elaborate structure there is a consistent culture of unilateral state action in matters of policy decision-making. The lack of active participation of learners enabled the state to unilaterally develop primers, and post-literacy materials (Maruatona, 2004). A recent evaluation of the BNLP concluded that there is a gap between policy formulation and implementation (UNESCO/UIE, 2004). The disparity between theory and practice necessitates an analysis of the program in order to explore ways in which it could facilitate community participation and enhance the impact of the literacy programs in poverty reduction.

Literacy for poverty alleviation in Botswana

According to the transformative approach discussed above, literacy can serve the purpose of facilitating community participation among its participants. This can be achieved in Botswana if there is a paradigm shift from a centralized to a decentralized literacy program. As used here, community participation donates the capacity of communities to enjoy their freedoms and make choices that would enhance their involvement in decisions affecting them, improve their world view and even their material well-being. The underlying assumption is that literacy could be geared towards enhancing the capacity of participants to transform their status of subordination and marginalization. This can be achieved if teachers are willing to use literacy to help learners to be more reflective on their daily activities and counteract negative aspects of the dominant culture and discourse. Critical teachers help their learners to affirm their voices and directly link their literacy experiences to the transformative vision characterized by a better and more informed future (McLaren, 1998). Bell Hook (1994) stresses the need for communicative openness where teaching and learning sites encourage truth telling, and trust and respect between teachers and students for each other's experiences. Simon (1992) observes that literacy sites should be places of cultural politics, where a sense of identity, peace, worth and value are informed and inspired through organized knowledge and meaning

making. The above sentiments can be achieved if the planning of literacy education in Botswana is decentralized, learning is organized to facilitate deliberative democracy and there is deliberate use of participatory approaches such as REFLECT to facilitate community participation and poverty alleviation.

Literacy and Decentralization

The conventional approach to literacy planning stems from the need to give planners the exclusive prerogative to use their experience and expertise to plan for and not with those end users of their plans. In Botswana, there is no evidence that in the BNLP themes were generated from participants' perspectives. Consequently, the contents have ossified through lack of review and re-invigoration over the years. The teaching and learning approach used in the BNLP involves learners interacting briefly with pictures during the lesson. Learners engage in a short discussion on what they see in the pictures. They then would concentrate on decoding words and phrases below the picture. The scope of discussion of the picture is often very narrowly focused to introducing the key concepts, and does not explore broader social and political issues (Maruatona, 1995). The process is intended to facilitate rote learning through decoding syllables, words and sentences. The program does not help learners to effectively redress their local, regional and national challenges. Women participate in the program but the instructional materials do not effectively reflect their personal and family and community needs (Reimer, 1997). This necessitates decentralization of the development of literacy curriculum to facilitate community participation and the use of acquired skills for poverty alleviation. Decentralization denotes the transfer of authority from high echelons of a given system to geographically dispersed agents, thereby strengthening local staff to make decisions on their daily work. This would enable literacy educators in Botswana to learn more about the needs of their local communities and infuse their realities into the curriculum since learning occurs in social contexts (Barton & Hamilton, 1998). As presently organized, literacy plans and their resultant outcomes are left to technocrats and exclude learners (Maruatona, 2002).

Decentralization would help to involve local literacy supervisors and teachers to enable them to factor family and community perspectives into the curriculum. This would enhance the link between literacy practice and community participation. This would in turn provide learners with skills they need to alleviate poverty in their families. In a decentralized program, educators are deeply involved in the selection of textbooks and the development of reading materials so that they can infuse the aspiration, and family histories of their learners into the programme in order to facilitate democratic openness and trust (Hooks, 1994). The process would enable literacy teachers to incorporate local cultures into discussion of subjects such as numeracy, family planning and HIV/AIDS, which would help learners to critically challenge their own worldviews and assumptions. Weil (1998) correctly observed that decentralizing literacy provision could prove to be empowering for both teachers and learners as they democratically deliberate about and take charge of their learning. The collective participation in decision making would help them prepare appropriate programs and projects to alleviate poverty among the rural and urban poor in Botswana. Literacy provision in this regard would encourage people to own programs, encourage democratic deliberation, and reduce their sense of learnt helplessness because one cannot teach democracy without being democratic.

Literacy and Deliberative Democracy

Literacy planning in Botswana does not actively involve the end users. As indicated above, Botswana has held elections every five years since 1966. However, people in Botswana take part but do not participate in this democratic dispensation because they lack the capability to do so. One of the manifestations of this is that the ruling party continues to be elected by poor and underprivileged communities in rural Botswana while those in urban areas vote for opposition parties. The electorate does not hold its elected officials to their campaign manifestos and election promises. Communities do not participate in Botswana's brand of democracy, hence literacy has to be evoked to help them engage in deliberative democracy and voter empowerment. Deliberative democracy involves people in determining what kind of community they would like to create through indulging in extensive conversations about public choices. It enables people to engage in civil debate about issues affecting their communities (Mathews, 1999).

Since 1948, following a major adult education conference, literacy has been recognized as a human right and there are expanded visions of what literacy should do in a community including facilitating democracy and tolerance of difference among community members. The legitimacy of literacy provision will not stem from international agencies such as UNESCO alone but should be filtered to the concerned communities for educators to earn the cooperation and respect of such communities (ICAE, 2003). Botswana's efforts to alleviate poverty should be based on dialogue between national leaders and communities as opposed to the current situation where dialogue is characterized by a litany of empty rhetoric from politicians and bureaucrats. Deliberations in Botswana can be facilitated by the use of community meeting place, the *Kgotla* system, which has the potential to enable people to participate in democratic discussions. Ideally, at the *kgotla* all are free to share their views to provoke constructive reactions and criticism resulting in decisions that would yield common social good. The people's collective wisdom is embedded in such institutions and they help to establish consensus. Unfortunately, such institutions have currently been undermined by the political elite, who use them to manipulate communities for their own ends, and are no longer viewed as sites of productive discussions. Singh (2003) argues that in Africa, a substantial proportion of women and minorities in rural and urban areas are still denied access to their right to education and the opportunities it brings such as living healthier and more productive lives.

Voting every five years is an aspect of what people need to engage in deliberative democracy but it is not sufficient on its own. It facilitates neither participation nor active citizenship, which are considered essential ingredients for a democracy. As Heather (1999) indicates, active citizenship plays a key role in public life enabling society to identify its problems, negotiate about them and work towards a common social good. The process of deliberative democracy should enable citizens to have skills of inquiry, communication and participation in civic responsibilities. Literacy provision should help citizens to become autonomous beings who have a critical perspective on the education they receive and could challenge assimilative approaches to education (Ladson-Billings 1994). They should help citizens to develop a critical appreciation of reality and be tolerant in the context of exercising democracy (Davis, 2003). The desire for deliberation will remain an intangible ideal unless literacy

educators in Botswana help citizens to exercise it in all aspects of their lives, especially their families. The establishment of deliberative democracy would also allow families and communities to engage in constructive dialogue and be sensitive but relentless in their criticism of the leadership, which would improve the delivery of democracy, gender equity and social justice (Singh, 2003). Botswana needs the kind democracy discussed above, which can only take root if citizen are actively involved in deliberative democracy. Access to literacy has not proven to be sufficient in helping Botswana's citizens to take control of their lives, engage in community participation and alleviate poverty. Evidence on the capability approach suggests that the poor in all communities do not need only material support, but help to build human capacity to engage in deliberative democracy (Matthews, 1999). Hence, teachers in Botswana need to use participatory approaches to deliver literacy education.

Literacy and the participatory approach

It has already been indicated that some sections of the population of Botswana such as in rural areas, female headed households, people in peri-urban centers, women and minorities are gravely disadvantaged. It is argued that such groups could be empowered through the use of participatory approaches such as Regenerated Freirean Literacy Through Empowering Community Techniques (REFLECT). This participatory approach has been used in over 60 Third World countries since 1993. It was found to enable people to address forces that deny them access to power. The method enabled them to see their central role in processes affecting them. It enabled communities to gain access to certain decision-making opportunities. REFLECT helps people to participate in the process of analyzing their local conditions to promote action and access locally available resources (Archer, 2000; Popkins, 1998). These positive effects of the REFLECT strategy suggest a useful connection between literacy acquisition and the enhancement of opportunities for poverty alleviation. At the heart of REFLECT, is the intent to conduct a collective community analysis of social and economic issues, especially exploring how they can be interwoven into the literacy curriculum.

The argument is that notwithstanding its limitations, REFLECT, if adopted in Botswana, could enable communities to control their development agenda from within rather than letting it be prescribed from outside (Cottingham, 1998). For example, in a recently completed REFLECT project in Botswana, adult learners and their teachers made crucial decisions that were independent of the conventional literacy program in terms of discussion of topics and choices of income generating projects. REFLECT circle meetings enabled literacy learners to discuss health and minority issues in ways that ensured that the process went beyond reading and writing as the primary focus of literacy programs (Maruatona, 2004). Kanyesigye (1998) observes that REFLECT groups in Uganda empowered communities by enabling them to critically analyze inequality in their societies and question the dominant development paradigm.

It is argued that the most daunting tasks for Botswana literacy educators, therefore are to makes the content respond to the felt needs of the learners by taking their history and local culture, and their current and future goals into account in developing the curriculum. It should enable communities to contribute to discussions affecting their

daily lives (UNESCO-BREDA, 1998). However, in Africa, even fairly democratic states such as Botswana, still emphasize total integration of minorities through the use of one national language at the expense of other cultures in literacy classes (Le Roux, 2001). However, adult educators should work with rural communities to bring about people-centered development. Communities therefore need to be reassured that they should take responsibility for their participation in developments. They have to be helped to make choices based on their limited human and natural resources. The empowerment of rural communities in Botswana would enable them to negotiate the utilization of their local resources.

Adult educators should engage citizens in alleviating poverty through working with them to create democratic spaces to ensure that they motivate each other to become "public" at both local and national levels. A sense of achieving public recognition of issues leads to mutual trust and comprehension of issues among members of a given community. For example, in Nigeria, REFLECT circles discussed community issues, prioritized them and made a community action plan which linked local action to national community mobilization processes (Newman, 2000). In Uganda, it enabled communities to meet and discuss pertinent issues (Kanyesigye, 1998). The outcome is that local and national concerns can be balanced in such a way that village level development aspirations are catered for in district development plans. As Fishkin (1995) observes, "this would be a place where citizens have a public life, where public questions meet active, engaged citizens" (p. 148). The active involvement of people in this way requires the use of participatory techniques where adult educators work with the community to identify and prioritize social issues. Adult educators in these contexts provide technical information to the community and help to guide their development agenda (Youngman & Maruatona, 1998). The above discussion illustrates and justifies the use of participatory approaches in the development of literacy projects that could facilitate community participation and alleviate poverty. It should be noted that literacy can never be a panacea for all social and political challenges faced by illiterates and special groups such as women and monitories. It is however, essential for enabling them to understand the socio-cultural context in which they work. It helps them appreciate how their situation reinforces their subordination and lack of active participation in the developments of their communities.

Conclusion

The paper explored the linkages between literacy, community participation and efforts to alleviate poverty through literacy delivery in Botswana. It demonstrated that in spite of its economic success Botswana continues to be bedeviled by poverty and lack of effective community participation. The paper conceptualized different types of poverty arguing that the most critical type of poverty is that of lack of capability of individuals to use their freedoms to make informed choices. It outlined concepts of literacy and indicated that Botswana is engaged in conventional as opposed to transformative literacy. However, it contended that there is a need to organize an alternative transformative literacy that would enhance the connection between community participation and poverty alleviation. Finally, it suggests that in Botswana, linkages between literacy and community participation and poverty alleviation can be attained through organizing a decentralized literacy education program. Literacy provision has to be guided by the principles of deliberative democracy to enhance public ownership of programs and projects. It proposes the use of participatory

approaches such as REFLECT, which is premised on encouraging communities to identify and prioritize problems affecting them. Finally, it proposes that participants be enabled to decide how to use literacy to resolve social problems and engage in community participation and to facilitate poverty alleviation in Botswana.

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Transcending numerical figures: The challenge of functional literacy in Zimbabwe and South Africa

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Zimbabwe Book Development Council

A dilemma exists in Africa today. We are a continent caught between the harsh reality of our often grim existence, and the more idealistic and surreal standards (from an African point of view) of human existence as prescribed by the western world. The dichotomy in this polarity is however ambiguous in many instances. This is largely due to Africa's resilience in fighting for the "ideal", where we have large groups of people and even nations approximating the surreal standards. This scenario creates an illusion of modernity, this being an accepted standard of human existence, and eventually leads to an almost unanimous acceptance and contentment with the façade as a true representation of our society's needs, achievements and position as a member of the international community.

It is obviously an enormous task to attempt to separate all the aspects of our society today whose reality is completely disassociated from the official and accepted representation of the same. In line with the theme and sub-themes of this conference, our understanding of our society's literacy ability and requirements need not be shrouded in percentages as officially given, but should be correctly and contextually placed to assist us in the correct delivery of literacy programs that really transform our existence as a people.

The dichotomy discussed above, and many other polarities, are evident in the literacy field where even the definition of what literacy is, is a point of debate. This paper does not seek to join the debate on the correct definition of literacy and the standards of measuring it, rather, the paper focuses on the significance of literacy and whatever levels of it that we obtain, for the existence of our people in their communities. Terrence Wiley while looking at factors affecting the measurement of literacy points out that

> …attempts to measure literacy…have had drawbacks…our ability to measure literacy …is limited …by resources, by our instruments of assessment, and our assessment of what it means to be literate.
> (Wiley, 1991)

The problems and questions surrounding the issue of literacy in Africa are many. It is however, to a large extent our understanding of what it is and what we want it to serve in our society which determines our ability to tackle and possibly contain the literacy challenges to name just a few. There are a number of conceptualisations of literacy that have been put across, such as looking at literacy skills as a "single set of skills measured along a continuum,…or the ability to perform specific print related practices in specific social contexts"(Ibid). All these concepts have weight in them; however, the question that needs to be addressed is "what objective is this literacy

serving?" There are disputes over the contribution and role of cultural and oral literacy to a nation's literacy levels. The major contention in this debate is the exclusion of these concepts in main line literacy campaigns which focus primarily on the ability to count, read and write. Does this exclusion suggest that the widely accepted standards of literacy are meeting their functions in our society? Is the ability to read, count and write what our societies really need?

Only recently, a host on a radio talk show in Zimbabwe was boasting of Zimbabwe's high literacy rate estimated at over 90%, which he pointed out, makes the country one of the most developed on the continent. This sentiment is shared by many with such ease; a perception of development that is really problematic when considered with the socio – economic condition of the country in question. The relevance and attributes of a literate society in general have been reiterated in various publications and it is pointless to attempt to do the same here. However, to contextualise the magnitude of the literacy challenge facing the region, one has to appreciate that literacy is regarded as a vehicle through which information is made more readily accessible. In this context, Zimbabwe's literacy levels suggest that over 90% of its population is able to access innumerable bodies of literature for its benefit. The following statistics highlight the existing trends between literacy levels and other important indexes in Zimbabwe, South Africa and Mozambique.

Country	Literacy	Other Index	Percentage
Zimbabwe	90%		
	Male 90%	Industrial GDP	14
	Female 80%	Agricultural GDP	11
		Population in Poverty	**70**
		Inflation rate	265,1
		Unemployment rate	70
		Industrial growth rate	-10

Country	Literacy	Other Index	Percentage
South Africa	85%		
	Male 86%	Industrial GDP	31
	Female 85%	Agricultural GDP	3
		Population in Poverty	**50**
		Inflation rate	5.8
		Unemployment rate	37
Country	Literacy	Other Index	Percentage
Mozambique	42%		
	Male 88%	Industrial GDP	25

	Female 27%	Agricultural GDP	33
		Population in Poverty	**70**
		Unemployment rate	21

The information presented above paints an undesirable picture of the region. Zimbabwe's economy is in accelerated recession, making it a special case and very outstanding in that condition, and high literacy rates are not translating to improved living conditions for the people. The literacy skills that people have obtained have not sufficiently empowered them to deal with the socio- economic and even political challenges that are stifling growth. A situation where Zimbabwe with over 90% literacy has a percentage of people living in poverty as high as does Mozambique which has less than 50% literacy is indicative of probable inadequacies in the literacy programs existing. While poverty has a bearing on the literacy levels of a nation, making it difficult for most people to access literacy skills, it is the seemingly continued inability of high literacy to influence levels of poverty that shapes the discourse of this paper.

There are several factors that can influence the impact of literacy in a community. As already suggested, the prevailing economic crisis in Zimbabwe is a good example of how conditions can limit people's ability to perform to their fullest potential. It is however still arguable that this crisis is in itself an indication of illiteracy in both the private and public handling of financial matters. In other words there is an inability to read the forces affecting the economy and being able to take the correct aversive measures to avoid a near total collapse as now exists. The ability to read the environment, the daily demands of our existence, is an element of literacy that is not being given sufficient prominence, as it should. This is particularly important given the lack of attention to literacy in other languages and concepts other than English. The absence of local language rhetoric in spheres of economic and social development, the failure to engage these as vehicles and platforms for serious debate alienates a large percentage of our society whose daily routine derives from and is informed by the same languages and concepts. In efforts to bring literacy home, that is to the grassroots and lay person, it is therefore fundamental to realize and dispel the misconception that literacy means English literacy and that non-proficiency in English is illiteracy. In reality, it is almost implicit that Africa's inability to lift itself from poverty can be blamed on a "fluent but illiterate" leadership.

In explaining "fluent but illiterate", one has to look at both the body politic and general public's consistent inability to forge escape routes out of poverty and HIV/AIDS, now synonymous with Africa. In other words, in bringing literacy to the people, there is now a great need to look at literacy as a skill meant to meet specific functions in a society. The ability to read in this context, as was the case with oral literacy in our African oral tradition, refers to the informed and selective acting out in life, of those concepts and lessons contained in the narrative and that for the benefit of the individual and progressively the whole community. This is what seems to be lacking in our society today. The literacy skills that we have assessed to come up with the figures referred to earlier on are largely based on school enrolment, and the confidence we have in our education to impart these skills. This does not however

bring into consideration the observed fact that literacy tasks and skills do not necessarily carry over to the demands of work-related tasks. (Wiley, 1991) In other words, we have a large population with school type literacy, which is difficult to put to use in the routines of daily life after school. The trend in Zimbabwe is such that reading for pleasure and self-enrichment is an elite thing, especially when it comes to indigenous publications. The majority of the people only accessed these as set books for school examinations.

The answer to the problems identified in this presentation rest in the conceptualisation of literacy and what it should serve in our society. There is however an obvious need to transform, especially in efforts to promote literacy in the home environment, the attitudes towards the role of literacy. In promoting early childhood literacy development, it is important that children learn reading and writing as skills that they can use to perform other important tasks of their life. There is need to move away from literacy programs that focus on the skill as the ultimate goal. The existing literacy statistics and similarly high poverty and unemployment rates suggest that simply teaching reading and writing mechanics does not motivate people unless the instruction is accompanied by the acquisition of functional skills focused on everyday needs (Greenberg 2002).

The American National Commission on reading defined reading as "the process of constructing meaning from written texts … a complex skill requiring the coordination of a number of interrelated sources of information." (Anderson and others, 1985) This is a definition that will be useful in the development of reading instruction for our region. Literacy should mean for our families, the ability to engage with all forms and bodies of information, and to process the interrelations between these bodies to come up with knowledge that informs every other action. In bringing literacy home, there is a need to embrace definitions of literacy that go beyond conventional reading and writing. "The Literacy Development Council of Newfoundland and Labrador looks at literacy as not only involving competency in reading and writing, but going beyond this to "include the critical and effective use of these in peoples' lives, as well as the use of language (oral and written) for all purposes. This definition involves critical thinking about what one reads, as well as expanding the term to encompass oral forms of literacy" (Valenzuela, 2005).

Current literacy statistics, especially in Zimbabwe and South Africa are very commendable, and are the result of serious efforts and planning. This paper does not seek to undermine these achievements; rather, it seeks to find ways of building upon this base and strengthening the quality and standard of literacy obtaining in the region. Functional literacy is not a new concept, but what remains is making it the central aspect of literacy campaigns. Social functions vary with places and the ability to model literacy skills according to these functions is fundamental in developing a people whose literacy has a productive value. It will not just be another statistic, but a skill that makes a difference in the lives of mothers and children and the fathers too.

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Section 3

Poster and Workshop

Poster presentation by Project Literacy

Adults play at PLA and REFLECT

Workshop by Family Literacy Project and Jill Frow (independent PLA practitioner)

Abstract

PLA and REFLECT are two ways of working with adults that encourage their participation, and value the information and experience they bring. The overall aim of all participatory methods is to enable people to express themselves, analyse the realities of their lives and grow and learn in the process.

It is widely accepted that children learn and grow through play. What about adults? It is easy to understand that if the "threat" is taken out of a situation, the adult will be more open to learning; and this suggests an element of fun needs to be present in adult learning.

Marcel Jousse throws other lights onto adult and child learning when he talks about the actual process that takes place. He believed that everything that happens around us "plays" into our senses and we in turn "play" out these impressions onto the world. This would suggest that the more senses involved in the learning process; the more easily the impressions are borne into the memory.

If this is so, then the learning activity should not only be fun and interesting but also involve as many senses as possible. This is beginning to sound very much like PLAY, especially when one adds Jousse's belief that rhythm is an essential part of our lives, and rhythm and repetition should be an essential ingredient in every learning activity.

This workshop will involve participants in different activities that they can use in their own work. These tools are used in participatory learning appraisals and also by Reflect practitioners who use them to draw out what people know and can do and establish the relevance of the topic under discussion.

This workshop was presented in three sections:
1. An example of a REFLECT tool
2. Description of Family Literacy Project activities by way of a poster
3. Examples of participatory activities

The example chosen by the Family Literacy Project facilitators is known as a **mobility map**. It is one of the tools used by REFLECT practitioners. (REFLECT is a participatory approach to development and literacy inspired by the work of Paulo Freire.)

A mobility map

A mobility map can be used to determine the literacy needs of people in a community.
a) Hand out cards and ask participants to write (or draw) the places where they go where they need to be able to read and write to operate effectively.
b) Ask that only one example be given on each card.
c) As a group agree where there is duplication and discard the extra cards.
d) Display the cards and discuss the difficulties experienced at any of the places e.g. clinic, church, school, bus stop.
e) Decide which difficulties are the ones we need to solve first.
f) Participants would be asked to copy the mobility map into books.
g) This map can be used as a way to evaluate progress over the months as participants can see how they are able to cope better with difficulties noted in the exercise.

A poster

The Family Literacy Project facilitators described the activities of their project by displaying a **poster** and discussing it. This particular poster had been created before the "Bringing Literacy Home" conference. The process of creating a poster is a very valuable participatory learning tool for a group, and the poster can become a useful vehicle for the sharing of information. The facilitators described the following facets of their project:

a) The unit. The unit is key to the group's family literacy activities. Each unit consists of six or seven sessions. An issue relevant to the group is chosen. A REFLECT tool is used to find out what the group already knows about the issue and what they want to know more about. Literacy and numeracy activities are built into each of the sessions. One session addresses the way adults can work with children, giving ideas for activities, books or games that highlight the unit topic.

b) Community Libraries: the project has two community libraries and one more is being built for us. These are well used by group members, their children and others in the wider community.

c) Book clubs: Group members meet regularly to discuss the books they have read.

d) Newsletter: This covers news about the project and also includes letters written to the editor by group members.

e) Penfriends: Members of one group write to those in another one of the project groups.

f) Umzali Nengane: These are journals kept by group members and their children. They choose a picture from a magazine or draw one, discuss it and the adult writes down the conversation.

g) Home visits: Group members visit families not attending project sessions. They read to the children, play with puzzles and demonstrate other games. They also discuss health issues based on the IMCI messages (Integrated Management of Childhood Illnesses).

h) Child to child: Weekly sessions are held with mixed age groups in primary schools. These sessions are to promote a love of reading and books and encourage writing and drawing.

i) Health groups: members of the community are invited to attend sessions where health issues are discussed.

j) Skills development: group members have been provided with some training in sewing and fabric painting.

k) Community noticeboards: group members write or draw about the issues discussed in the sessions. These are displayed on boards so that the wider community can benefit from the information.

Participatory activities

Other examples of **participatory activities** were demonstrated by Jill Frow, an independent consultant who works closely with the Family Literacy Project.

Patterns

The **aim** of this activity is to have fun, break down reserve, and for facilitators and participants to get to know about each others lives and feelings. It is also to stimulate participants mentally and physically. This is a very good language learning tool because of the rhythm and repetition involved.
Equipment : 3 balls of different shape and texture.
Process:
> Participants stand in a circle with arms in the air.
> Facilitator starts by throwing one ball to a participant.
> That participant throws to another in the circle, and immediately puts her arms down.
> Everyone must only throw to someone with their arms up.
> Everyone must remember to whom she throws the ball because she has to throw it to the same person the next time round.
> When everyone has thrown the ball and there are no more people with their arms in the air, the same pattern of throwing is repeated.
This can go on several times, with a gradual increase of speed.
Once the ball is flowing smoothly the facilitator introduces a second ball, and even a third, keeping the same pattern going. This causes hilarity, and requires mental alertness!

At a certain point, the facilitator halts the proceedings and introduces a topic for participants to speak on before they throw the ball. Participants say something on the topic and then throw the ball. The telling and the ball flow in the same pattern as before. At this point it is advisable to use only one ball. Then the facilitator introduces a second topic, and so on. Numbers of topics can be introduced.

There are various reasons for keeping to the same pattern with the ball. Initially, it is mentally stimulating to think about whom to throw to, and creating the pattern helps to focus everyone away from the pressures of home and onto the activity at hand. It is not a threatening activity because it is not about who is good at catching the ball. Once the pattern has been maintained, the group is almost lulled into the rhythm of the ball and there is very little self consciousness about the sharing.

Examples of topics to talk about are:
"I grew up in…. and there were …. in my family"
"The person in my family I was closest to was…."
"My favourite game when I was a child was…."

These would be typical of the topics used to 'set the scene' for a storytelling session. However, if the focus for the day was family health the facilitator would introduce topics such as:

"One of the rules in my family about washing is…."
"If someone in my family is sick, we get help from…."
"The person who taught me most about staying healthy was…."

Facilitators should start with simple topics and lead up to topics that require more thought.

Jika Jika

The **aim** of this activity is get participants and facilitators to move rhythmically, mingle with others, relax and have fun while learning about the preferences and similarities in the group. It is also a natural way of getting people into pairs or small groups for deeper discussion.
Equipment: a soft whistle or drum
Process:

The facilitator calls out *"jika jika" "jika jika"* while the people dance and chant in unison.
At the sound of the whistle, the people stop and listen, and obey the instruction given.
Examples of instructions:
"Get into groups of four"
"Get into groups of seven"
"Group with people wearing the same colour dress/shirt"
"Group with people who use the same brand of "
"Group with people who use the same brand of rice"

After each instruction the facilitator allows only a short period of time for groups to form and then calls out the chant "jika jika" to get people moving around the room again.
After a suitable time of lighthearted fun the facilitator calls out:
"Get into groups of three and discuss the following…"
Once again the facilitator chooses the topic to suit the focus for the day, be it learning difficulties, community jealousy, unco-operative leaders etc.

This activity can be used to allow people to unburden themselves of the concerns they carry with them from home
For example:
"Share with your group a difficulty you had in getting here today"
"Share with your group the main concern that is filling your mind"
"Share with the group something good/bad that is happening in your community at this time"

It can also be used to evaluate the workshop:
"Share two things that you have learned at this workshop and two things you are going to implement when you get home"
"Now one person write these down on the pieces of card provided"

Reflections on these Activities

It is important to have a note taker or a recorder of some kind to capture the information orally shared.

There are characteristics that are common to all the activities described above:

They can be adapted to achieve a huge range of purposes
They are all non-threatening – more like play than work - and therefore likely to draw valid information from people
The information gathered is not dependant on people being literate
They involve a range of sensory activity which activates memory, frees up thoughts and feelings
They give people credit for their life experience and knowledge gained
They provide people with the opportunity to participate in analysing their own lives and planning for their own futures

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Section 4

Extracts from presentations for which no papers were available

Masifunde Nosapho: "Let us learn with our families" Eastern Cape

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Institute of Training and Education for Capacity Building (ITEC)

Abstract

This paper tells the story of an action research project started in 2005 in Mdantsane, Eastern Cape. The impetus for the project was the low literacy and numeracy achievements amongst young learners in Grade 3, with all the subsequent limitations in life choices for these children as they grow up. Although the causes of low early numeracy and literacy are complex, a positive collaboration between school, parents (or caregivers) and the children themselves could encourage learning, which at present is exacerbated by the division between the language and culture of home and school. This project, therefore, aims to buttress the learning relationship between the parent, child and teacher in six Grade R and 1 classes in Mdantsane schools, through locating the parent and home as the crucial catalyst in a child's learning. The approach of this project is to harness the local knowledge of parents and teachers to develop activities that can be used at school and at home to encourage early literacy and numeracy. The materials themselves will be developed and 'owned' by the parents, teachers and children.

In the formal, passive atmosphere of school, learning is often a very serious activity.

2005/06/08

The school context is sometimes about separation from family and community life. Yet caregivers can form an essential bridge between formal school learning and the learning that children construct socially

Reading is FUNdamental

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Abstract

Research worldwide consistently shows that children from high poverty areas and non-mainstream communities tend to have low reading levels and perform poorly at school. However, research has also shown that exposure to extensive reading can counteract these effects. Since 2002, the entry level reading skills of Grade 8s coming into high school in a township near Pretoria have been assessed in English as well as in three African languages. The results have consistently shown that the learners' reading comprehension levels are low and reading rates very slow, in both English and their home languages. These results raise questions about literacy instruction and practices in primary schools. In this presentation an outline will be given of a reading project that has been implemented in a low-income school to promote literacy development. The project adopts a holistic approach by involving teachers, learners, parents and the community library. Issues such as home and school literacy practices, OBE outcomes, intergenerational literacy and project sustainability will be discussed. The implications of an extensive reading programme for supporting literacy, language and cognitive development are considered within the South African context.

Some literacy figures

Of South Africa's population
- 18% have no education at all
- 20,4% adults have completed Grade 12
- 64,8% Grade 1s reach Grade 5
- 51% have reached high school
- 8,4% have tertiary level qualifications

(United Nations report 2003)

In South Africa, 95% of book shops are in urban areas.

Only 27% of schools have libraries (Wafarawora 2002). In the 1999 audit of South African school libraries, of the aggregate book stock in schools in KwaZulu-Natal, there were only 105 titles of fiction books in Zulu (Barth, Patterson & Visser, 1999).

Literacy in schools

In a 2001 audit, children scored a mean of 38% in reading and writing in their home language in Grade 3 (Department of Education 2002)

In 2002, in the WCED, children scored a mean of 35% for literacy, and 36,6% for numeracy in Grade 3 (n 34,000). Only 62.7% of Grade 3s met Grade 2 literacy requirements.

In 2002, in the WCED, only 35% of Grade 6 learners performed at 50% or above in the literacy assessment (WCED, 2005)

The UNESCO-UNICEF Monitoring Learning Achievement (MLA) Project in African countries showed that SA Grade 4 learners performed at the lowest levels of the spectrum for numeracy and fared only marginally better for literacy skills (Strauss & Burger, 1999).

Literacy at tertiary level

Literacy levels at Gauteng technikons appear to be dismally low.

In 1990, 51% (of a sample of 568) were assessed to have levels of literacy competence comparable with Grade 8 or above.
In 1995, 25% (of a sample of 1 314) were assessed to have levels of literacy competence comparable with Grade 8 or above.
In 2000, 18% (of a sample of 451) were assessed to have levels of literacy competence comparable with Grade 8 or above.
(Hough & Horne 2001)

At a teacher's training college, it was found that of over 200 first-year students,
- 95% of the first-year teacher trainees read at or below Grade 8 level
- 3% could read at Grade 10 level
- 2% could read at Grade 12 level (Hough & Horne 2001)
- 17% teachers were under-qualified (DoE audit 2001)
- Mawasha et al. (1994) found that of 238 students at a teacher training college, only 5% read for pleasure

What is literacy or reading?

Reading includes a complex set of cognitive-linguistic skills and strategies, which readers use in interactive meaning construction. Reading accomplishment is embedded in socially construed values, attitudes and behaviours as reflected in home, school, community and broader socioeconomic and political institutions

Reading habits are driven by affective factors

Reading is a durable, effective and powerful means of accessing and acquiring information – it is the very means whereby learning occurs.

Componential model of reading

Reading has a **decoding** component which relates to
Sound/letter relationships
Automatic word recognition
Lexical access
Syntactic parsing

It also has a **comprehension** component which relates to
Activating schemas
Perceiving sequence
Making inferences
Integrating information
Critical evaluation
Locus of meaning in text

ALRU's research

ALRU works with a framework of ecological validity in a developing country. It uses an integrated model (Cognitive-linguistic accomplishment within context of social practice).

Research is combined with community work (capacity and resource building). An interdisciplinary approach is taken to literacy related problems, across Linguistics, African languages, Education, Information Science (libraries).

Research in Atteridgeville

Participants, from preschool to Grade 8 level and tertiary levels, undertook a range of literacy assessment tasks, in which their decoding and comprehension was assessed, and their literacy attitudes, behaviours and home background investigated.

Between 2002 to 2004:
- Reading skill of over 600 Grade 8 learners in English, Tsonga, Venda and Tswana was assessed
- Reading questionnaires were given to over 600 Grade 8 learners concerning attitudes, perceptions, home literacy practices, etc.
- Library was built up and a librarian appointed in the Flavius Mareka High School

In 2002 and 2003: Reading and library workshops were held for teachers, and in 2004 an enrichment class was held once a week for very weak Grade 8 learners (unfunded pilot project, in partnership with St Mary's DSG Outreach.

Summary of findings

Access to literacy

- 52% (n= 194) and 59% (n = 88) of Grade 8 learners in township schools came from homes in which there were 10 or fewer books (21% of Grade 7s)
- 59% of Grade 8s watched 2-4 hours of TV a day (in one school, 71% of the Grade 8s reported watching TV for 3-4 hours a day)
- 30% of Grade 8 learners had never had storybooks read to them in the home, and 65% had had stories read to them a few times only
- 54% of the Grade 7 learners had storybooks read to them at home

Children get only a flimsy foundation

Our schools are not producing comprehending readers; Children are competent readers neither in their home language nor in English.

- Language competence does not guarantee reading competence
- There are many over-age learners with reading problems (especially boys)
- Learners have little access to books, at home and school
- There is a weak culture of homework
- Major problems with reading exist in primary schools; there is no culture of reading
- Teachers are not adequately trained to deal with the problem
- Reading problems do not go away if ignored
- There are no overnight miracles or quick fixes for reading problems!
- Reading needs to be taught, practised and nurtured in schools, especially in communities with high levels of poverty.

Accessibility of books

In disadvantaged areas it is important for schools to become sites for literacy development.

In the International Studies in Educational Achievement (8- and 14-year olds in 32 countries), differences in reading ability were consistently and robustly associated with availability of books. "… the general message is that books are essential, no matter how rich or poor a nation is" (Elley 1994 - IEA)

While it is important to provide schools with books, it is critical that teachers - and parents - know what to do with these books

The school – parent problem

- Working in isolation from families, schools and teachers cannot provide their learners with the support needed for academic success
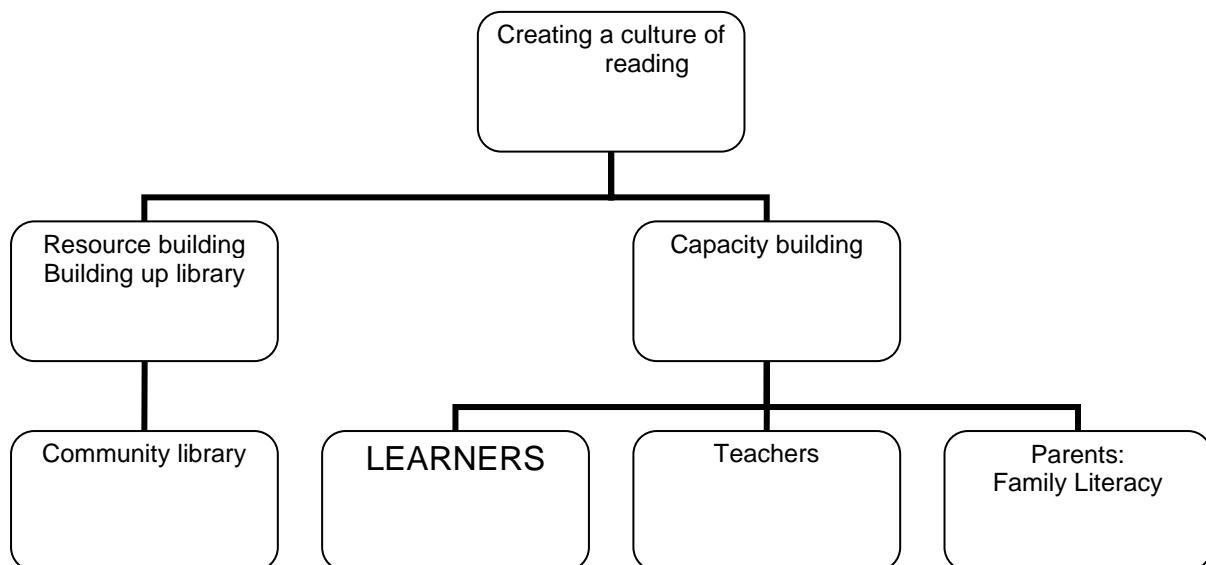
- Working in isolation from schools, families cannot address the needs of their children
- In their study of 14 schools in disadvantaged areas in the USA, Taylor et al. (2000) found that **effective schools** all had greater outreach to parents
- "When schools develop and implement strategies for promoting school-family-community partnerships, the result is improved learning for all students and strengthened schools, families, and communities" (NCREL – Abstract).

School-parent partnerships

Research indicates that school-parent partnerships produce:

- Better marks
- Better behaviour
- More positive attitudes to school
- Better school attendance
- More completed homework
- Learners stay in school and there are fewer drop outs
- Increased enrolment in education after high school
(Lemmer & Van Wyk, nd)

Multi-level approach to a reading project at primary school

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                    ┌─────────────────┐
                    │ Creating a culture of │
                    │      reading      │
                    └─────────────────┘
              ┌───────────────┴───────────────┐
    ┌─────────────────┐              ┌─────────────────┐
    │ Resource building │              │ Capacity building │
    │ Building up library │              └─────────────────┘
    └─────────────────┘          ┌────────────┼────────────┐
    ┌─────────────────┐  ┌────────────┐ ┌──────────┐ ┌──────────┐
    │ Community library │  │ LEARNERS   │ │ Teachers │ │ Parents: │
    └─────────────────┘  └────────────┘ └──────────┘ │ Family Literacy │
                                                      └──────────┘
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Making reading FUNdamental at Bathokwa

Bathokwa is a primary school of 16 teachers and + 602 learners, with school fees of R120 per annum, a school feeding scheme for 400 learners. There is one Grade R class, and two classes at each grade level. Northern Sotho is the language of learning and teaching until the end of Grade 3 (more than 65% of the learners come from Norhtern Sotho homes), and English becomes the language of learning and teaching in Grade 4.

Making reading FUNdamental – the library

The process of getting the library functional included:
- Establishing a library committee
- Weeding the library (i.e. discarding unusable materials)
- Appointing a librarian
- Cataloguing books and computerising the library
- Purchasing new books
- Developing a library policy

Making reading FUNdamental – teachers

The process of preparing teachers included
- Administering teacher questionnaires
- Running workshops with teachers so that they understood reading methods, skills, strategies
- Exposure to good practice
- Incorporating storybook reading in class
- Observing classroom practice
- Visits to school libraries

Making reading FUNdamental - learners

The process of preparing learners included

- Assessing reading skills of learners
- Encouraging community library membership
- Establishing classroom libraries
- Instituting a reading period
- Making book bags for Grade 1s
- Starting the practice of giving reading homework
- Getting across the idea of book buddies – where older children help younger children read so that the older children coach younger ones in reading skills and at the same time consolidate their own reading competence
- Encourage out-of-school reading for pleasure

Literacy as social practice

Ways in which members of particular social groups use and value literacy

What is observable is
- The variety and range of texts available and accessible
- Interactions with texts by individuals
- Individual and group assessments of literacy and scholastic accomplishments

What is not easily observable is
- Understanding what sense making and valuing goes on inside people's minds
- Their awareness of literacy
- How they talk about it and make sense of it
- How their attitudes and practices change

Making reading FUNdamental – Families

In this project parents were engaged in a programme that stimulated and supported family literacy. To begin with, a general workshop was attended by 242 parents. The reading project was explained, as was the relationship between reading and school success. Parents watched a video on storybook reading in Northern Sotho, and received handouts in Northern Sotho and English, and book bags. The practice of reading homework was started.
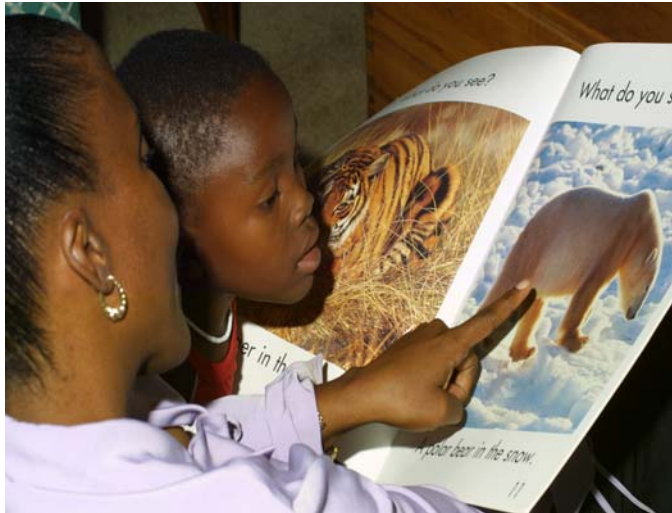
Grade 1 parent workshops
The relationship between reading and scholastic success was explained to parents, and they were encouraged to become members of a community library. The importance of storybook reading was stressed. Parents were also given home support guidelines in relation to reading, TV monitoring and sleep.

They shared role modelling of storybook reading, and then had group work sessions where these ideas were discussed and practised. This was followed by "Show and tell", a Grade One activity that most parents would probably be very aware of.

Grade 1 parent workshops

Grade 7 parent workshop

The relationship between reading and scholastic success was explained to parents, and they were encouraged to become members of a community library, and the importance of storybook reading was stressed. Parents were also given homework guidelines in relation to reading, TV monitoring and sleep.

In addition, the importance of the parent-school partnership was discussed, as was reading support and parents were given guidance in relation to anger management.

Monitoring – quantitative and qualitative methods

Monitoring of all components of the project is important.

- Comparison between pre- and post-test reading assessments; performance at control school
- Observations of classroom literacy resources and activities
- Exam marks
- School attendance
- Parental attendance and contact
- Anecdotal noting of programme effects on individuals ("stories about effects")

Features of successful partnerships

Shared vision at programme and management level is developed
Each partner's responsibilities are made clear
There is strong leadership at programme and management level
Parents' needs are identified and responded to
Projects are started small and built carefully
Opportunities are seen
School is not mimicked; rather learners are supported to achieve success
Feedback is given to all partners
    (Adger & Locke 2000).

Interim outcomes

Positives
- Provided opportunities to showcase the teachers and validate them
- Affirmed high expectations for all learners
- Helped teachers develop greater professionalism
- Built camaraderie - we had fun!
- Oral feedback was positive

Challenges
- Turn-out was modest
- More take-away backup was needed (handouts, schedules, etc)
- No follow-ups at present
- Research needed on home literacy interactions
- Need to build capacity in small groups on regular basis

Quo vadis family literacy component in project?

- Establish committee for school-parent partnerships
- Encourage/support teacher enrolment in Certificate course in Parent Involvement (1 year)
- Involve all phases
- Discuss school procedures for identifying and dealing with high risk learners; communicate this to parents
- Keep record of individual teacher-parent interactions
- Extend beyond literacy workshops -form partnerships with groups that deal with drug/alcohol abuse, domestic violence, home values and discipline
- Establish volunteer groups, e.g. reading mums

Feedback

- "The project has renewed our teaching spirit." (HS – Grade 1 teacher)
- "Some of the children are starting to read sentences. It eased the stress I had. I can now sleep at night." (DL - Grade 1 teacher)
- "We thought that reading stories was only to while away time, but as we read stories we realised that they are very important for developing language and enjoyment." (HS - Grade 1 teacher)
- "The children really love the story reading time. They are excited about the reading corner. Every child wants to see himself / herself sitting on a cursion and reading." (HS - Grade 1 teacher)
- "*We* are enjoying the stories too." (RM, HOD – Foundation Phase)
- "The kids talk a mixture of township slang and N. Sotho. I think that reading stories in N. Sotho is going to help them to speak the language properly." (NM – Grade 7 teacher)
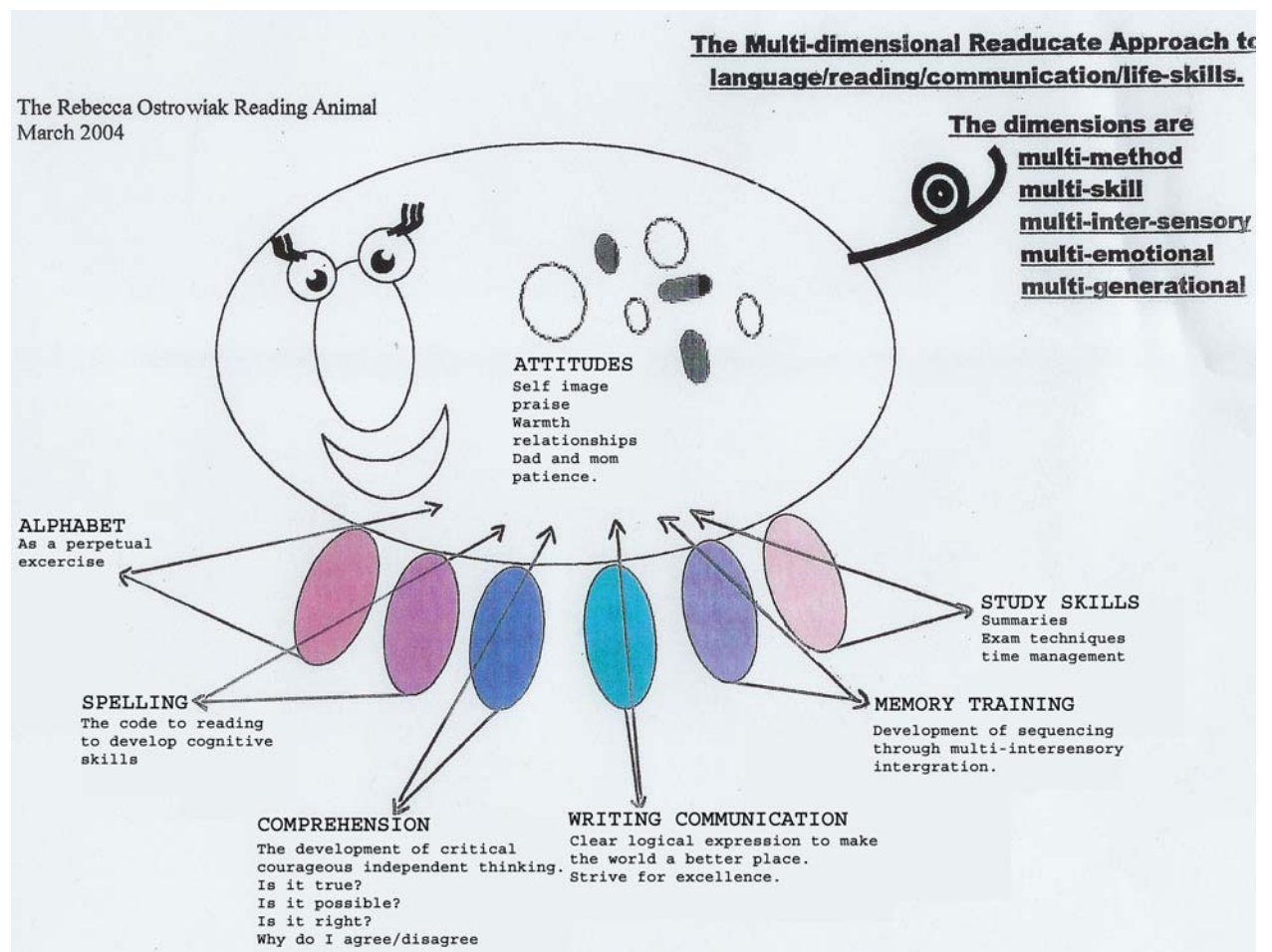
Acknowledgements

Reading is Relationships

Edna Freinkel
Readucate Trust

Abstract

This paper will discuss the value of parents reading to their children, children reading to their parents, and siblings reading to each other. With today's emphasis on TV, there is often little time spent on communication within families. Reading stories together in a joyful, non-threatening atmosphere gives parents the opportunity to hear their children's viewpoints on characterization, behaviour and environment that would otherwise not be possible. Fathers need to be encouraged in this aspect of family life as boys tend to regard reading as a feminine activity.

Where parents are illiterate children can read to them. The opportunity for discussion of values and life skills still presents itself.

The Rebecca Ostrowiak Reading Animal
March 2004

The Multi-dimensional Readucate Approach to language/reading/communication/life-skills.

The dimensions are
multi-method
multi-skill
multi-inter-sensory
multi-emotional
multi-generational

ATTITUDES
Self image
praise
Warmth
relationships
Dad and mom
patience.

ALPHABET
As a perpetual
excercise

SPELLING
The code to reading
to develop cognitive
skills

STUDY SKILLS
Summaries
Exam techniques
time management

MEMORY TRAINING
Development of sequencing
through multi-intersensory
intergration.

COMPREHENSION
The development of critical
courageous independent thinking.
Is it true?
Is it possible?
Is it right?
Why do I agree/disagree

WRITING COMMUNICATION
Clear logical expression to make
the world a better place.
Strive for excellence.

A definition of reading

Reading is a "six-legged animal" in which the body is ATTITUDE.

Attitude can create good relationships through honest praise, warmth and love or sour relationships through lack of understanding, resentment, and anger.

anger
is one letter away from
Danger
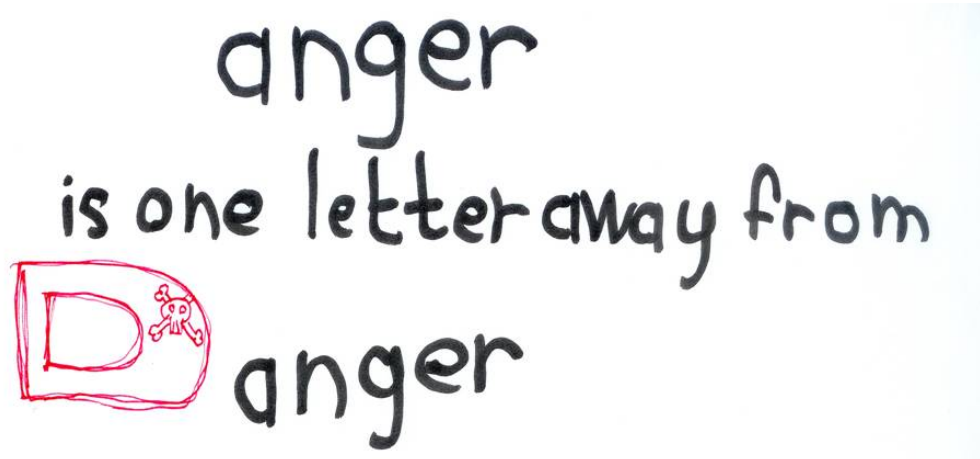
Homework Horror

A mother came to see me about her child's poor school performance. When I asked her about homework, she burst into tears and described the daily shouting match which always ended in Matthew, her Grade 3 child, and herself in tears, with her screaming, "You make me so angry I could strangle you!" I said to her she obviously loved her child otherwise she wouldn't have approached me. I suggested she say to her child, "Mummy loves you very much and doesn't like shouting. So every time you hear me take a deep breath before shouting, say, "'Mummy, you're at it again!' And then I'll stop homework time until we have both calmed down."

The result was that her attitude changed, the child's attitude changed as he laughed with her, and in the end the teacher phoned to ask why Matthew had changed!

Good Attitude
A good attitude creates good relationships through honest praise, and healthy self-confidence

Bad Attitude
A bad attitude can also sour relationships through lack of understanding, resentment, anger and bitterness, and can consolidate lifelong feelings of inferiority and self-doubt.

Babies Need Books

Babies can't turn pages. They don't know about stories.

But they understand loving arms, joyful voices and cuddling.

You can give your children a feeling of security and a lifelong love of books through reading to them even when they are tiny babies.
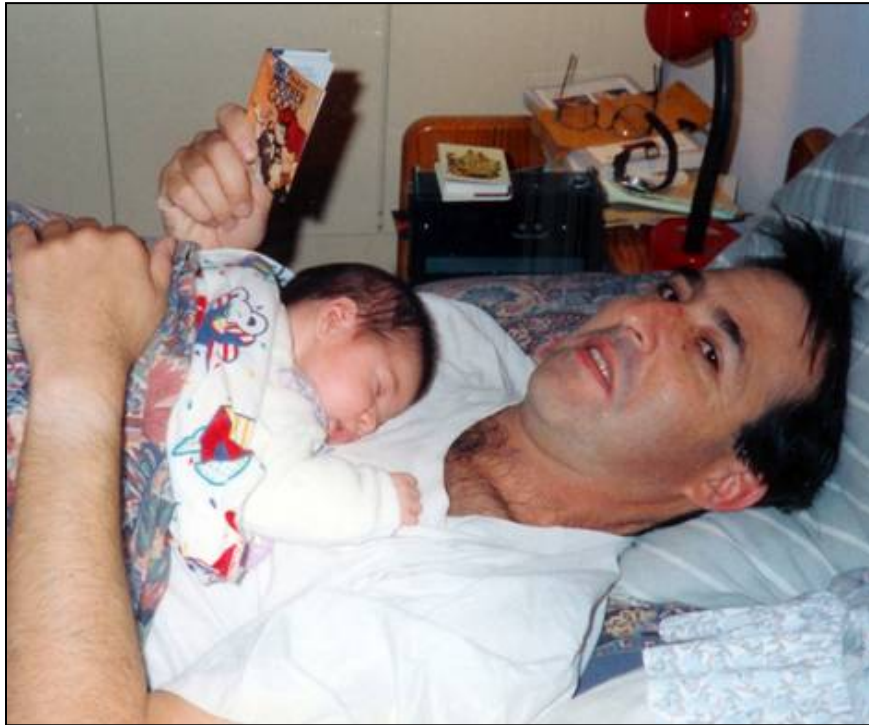
Growing up

Talk about books, and listen to what children say about what they see in books. An ideal time is just before children go to sleep. You can become great actors, and act out stories. Children will love the individual attention, and thrive on it.

To develop comprehension, the third leg of the Reading Animal, we need to **listen** and **hear** our children's responses.

Reading is living. But there are many parents, perhaps especially fathers, who underestimate its importance.

Illiterate Parents

Sadly, today there are still millions of parents who are illiterate. However, they can still talk with their children about things the children read. Some even get their children to help them learn to read.

Social Values

In our TV-crazy, social whirl there is often little time for communication within families, whether through chatting, or with emails, SMSs or books. Yet one can talk about TV programmes. It takes just 10 minutes to sit with children to watch a part of a programme. One can discuss who liked which part of the programme best and why, who everyone thought the nicest character was, and why they like him or her, and what this character did. One can also talk about what people in the family would have done if they had been in the situation shown in the programme.

At Germiston Library, at a screening of the film "Escape from New York" to an audience of 5-12 year olds, one girl chose the criminal as the nicest character because "he saved his friend". To me she was an original, insightful thinker, but she said her teacher said she was "dom".

Reading Environments

When people read together, and they discuss what they have read, they have the opportunity to hear each other's viewpoints. They can also discuss characterization, behaviour and the environment. Discussions should be non-threatening, so that people can voice courageous and honest opinions.

Relationships in Marriage

Husbands and wives can read to each other to enhance relationships. I am blessed to be on a 46 year honeymoon, reading to each other is part of our success – with a little love thrown in of course! Just this week my husband, Lionel, thrust a Time article critical of President Bush's handling of the Katrina catastrophe and said, much to my satisfaction, "You were right! He did handle it shockingly!"

Internet, Emails and SMSs

Reading, communication and speech extend to the Internet, emails and SMSs
I just love SMSs. Whenever I get an SMS that touches me, I dash it off to my children and our Readucate Family. Look at some of the beautiful and also fun messages I get and then send on thus creating a ribbon of love throughout the country:

Everyone wants to be the sun that lights up your life, but I'd rather be your moon so I can shine on you during your darkest hour when your sun isn't.

How can I spell s….cess without U? Or c….te, or h…..mble? or even tr….stworthy? I can't even la…gh without U. Don't know what I'd do without a friend like U.

Here's 2moros weather – there'll b showrs of blessings all over u and heavy downpr of God's favour all round u. So GO OUT!

Best wishes 4 2day. May u b 2busy 2b sad 2 positive 2b doubtful 2 determined 2b dfeated.

"Asia is cracking down on a technology that has become a powerful social tool, used to organize mass protests, sow wild rumours, perpetrate crime and, it is feared, trigger bombs… This month Malaysia ordered phone companies to register all holders of prepaid services after text-messaging gossip-mongers hit a raw nerve with false talk that the premier's ailing wife had died. The rumour grew so large, he felt compelled to deny it."   The Star Business Report of 7/9/05

Unknown Future

"The effect on language of the electronic age is obvious to all, even though the process has only just begun, and its ultimate impact is as yet unimaginable."

Power of Speech

We cannot read aloud without the power of speech: "Clearly there is more to the soul than the power of speech, but it is through speech that man can praise God, articulate the wisdom of His Torah, and unite with others to create a phalanx of servants dedicated to doing God's will."
Artscroll Prayer Book.

Conclusion

What better way of doing God's will than by developing good, loving relationships through:
- Parents reading to children
- Children reading to parents
- Husbands and wives reading to each other
- Teachers making sure that everyone CAN read according to our definition of reading as a six-legged animal?

Masithethe: Let Us Talk About Early Childhood Development

Workshop by Mary Newman and Linda Dlangamandla
Early Learning Resources Unit

Research indicates that 90% of an estimated 6.1 million children in South Africa between 0 and 9 years old fall outside the existing net of early childhood development (ECD) services. Parents and caregivers therefore have a central role to play both as educators of young children and potential advocates for children's rights.

Working within a human rights approach to programming the Early Learning Resource Unit (ELRU) developed the *Masithethe* programme - a series of handbooks that aims to get people talking about what they can do to facilitate early childhood development in the home and in the wider community.

Using a selection of text and images from the *Masithethe* series, our presentation will explore:

2. The thinking behind the Masithethe series and the concept of working with codes to promote dialogue and affirm existing child-rearing practices.
3. The art of asking questions: Different ways in which to work with the handbooks as a participatory tool for community development
4. The *Family and Community Motivator* Programme: A potential model for the delivery and roll-out of family and ECD support services – drawing on our experience of working with different sites around the country.

No formal paper is available. The following is adapted from a Power point presentation.

The first seven or eight years of life is a time of rapid physical, mental, emotional and social development. Children need support and stimulation during this sensitive period if they are to thrive and achieve their full potential. Yet the majority of young South Africans are falling through the cracks. Only 16% of children are reached by formal ECD services

The Family and Community Motivator Programme reaches out to children at risk and provides a range of support services

The programme includes:
- Home visits
- Cluster workshops
- Extending the safety net
- Family and Community Motivator s help children and caregivers access existing support services
- Putting children first

Each Family and Community Motivator works with up to 10 families. They identify and respond to the needs of both children and caregivers

Cluster workshops

Family and Community Motivator s arrange regular workshops to:
- identify needs e.g. child support grants and resources,
- share information about child growth and development and
- make improvised toys and books.

FCMs help children and caregivers access existing support services, and makes sure children's rights are placed on the local agenda.

Key concepts

Resilience

The livelihoods approach helps us understand why certain households are better able to cope with outside threats such as unemployment, drought or HIV/AIDS. These households draw on multiple livelihood strategies instead of relying on only one source of income.

They are also able to access and use a range of resources including:

- Natural resources – e.g. land, water, firewood, grazing, and building materials.
- Physical resources - buildings, tools and infrastructure such as clinics, schools, roads and electricity,
- Financial resources - access to money including wages, pensions, credit and things that we can sell such as cattle.
- Human resources - their own knowledge, skills and ability to labour
- Social resources - social networks of support such as friends, family, churches, NGOs and local government structures

Associative strengths

While Masithethe and the Family and Community Motivator programme do not necessarily address poverty alleviation in terms of accessing natural, physical or financial resources, they do promote resilience. By bringing caregivers together and encouraging them to share and learn from one another's experiences, Masithethe and the Family and Community Motivators help households build human and social "capital" .

For example: post natal depression and social isolation are key contributors to malnutrition and infant mortality.

Appreciative enquiry

Unlike traditional problem-solving approaches that focus our attention on problems and weaknesses, appreciative enquiry focuses on our successes and hopes for the future. Essentially, we get what we ask for. If we look for problems we will certainly find them and it is all too easy to get caught in and endless cycle of poverty, abuse and hopelessness. Instead, Masithethe **focuses on people's strengths**. It looks at what does work in our homes and community and explores how we can build on existing traditions, beliefs and practices of child raising.

A human rights approach to programming

Appreciative enquiry is a critical component of the
Human Rights Approach to Programming which places rights and responsibilities at the top of the development agenda.
Rights and responsibilities cannot exist in isolation.
They are two sides of the same coin.
The HRAP is designed to help **rights holders** claim their rights from a range of **duty bearers**

Rights and responsibilities
As parents of young children, we are the primary caregivers and duty bearers but we also need the support of our family, friends and the wider community. The government also has a duty to protect children's rights and deliver services such as water, health, housing and education. (Article 27 and 28 of the Bill of Rights,)

Active citizenship
Masithethe sees people as **active participants** in their own growth and development (not passive victims of global forces). Parents and caregivers are their child's first teacher and we focus on building **confidence** and the knowledge that **"I can make a difference"** and become an **agent of change.**

There is an old African saying: It takes a whole village to raise a child.
I know my rights
I can make a difference
Pictures from
Exclusive Books Trust presentation on rural library

Umzali Nengane (journals for parents and children)

Health support groups

Pen friends

Family Literacy Project
Lotheni, Mpumlwane, Ndodeni, Reichenau, Stepmore

Skills development

Community Libraries

Newsletters

Child to child groups

Community notice boards

Book clubs

Home visits
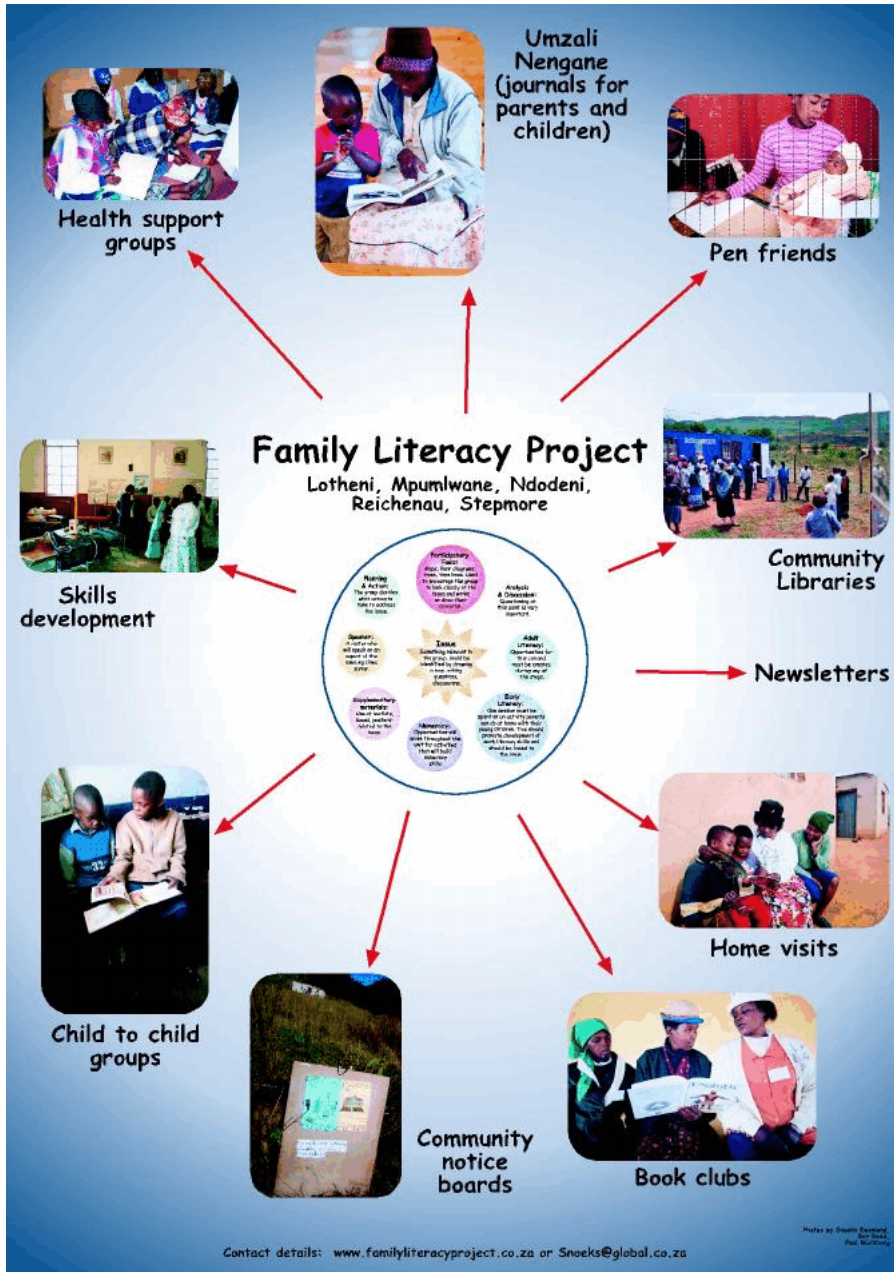
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These conference proceedings are a collection of the papers presented at the conference on family literacy hosted by the Centre for Adult Education, University of KwaZulu-Natal in September 2005. The conference was called "Bringing Literacy Home", and its purpose was to bring together people to present research findings or discuss projects that encourage and support family literacy. Participants came from South Africa, Namibia, Zimbabwe and Botswana and represented a range of organisations. Among them were many adult and ECD educators who were interested in learning about and discussing family literacy.

The conference included papers, workshops, dramatic presentations that invited participants to share in the pleasure of reading, poster, toy and book displays, and a group viewing and discussion of a video on family literacy which was made especially for the conference.

As can be seen from this collation, papers range from classic academic texts to emotive exhortations to read to children. Many focus on projects that attempt to inspire or urge adults to enjoy reading and writing with their children.

Unfortunately, the most popular sessions from the conference could not be captured in this collation, since they were those by drama students who read passages from books and poems and entertained everyone with role plays of situations where literacy skills are needed.

The conference was successful in raising awareness of the central importance of family literacy in developing the literacy skills of ordinary people, as well as awareness of the range of existing projects that promote and support family literacy. There were many calls for the conference to become a biannual event.

The video/DVD made for the conference shows South African families enjoying books and literacy activities in their homes. Its purpose is to make these activities explicit to people who have not lived within a literate culture, and for whom reading for pleasure, and reading to children outside of a school context are not familiar. Copies are available from New Readers Publishers, Centre for Adult Education, University of KwaZulu-Natal (031 260 2374 / nrp@ukzn.ac.za).

These conference proceedings are available on www.familyliteracyproject.co.za and on http://www.ukzn.ac.za/cae/.

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