

**INVESTIGATING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PARENTAL
LITERACY AND GRADE 3 LEARNERS' LITERACY ABILITIES
AT A PRIMARY SCHOOL**

**BY
JEFFREY PHILLIP ARENDSE
8214339**

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Supervisor: Mr M.N. Hendricks

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ABSTRACT

The study sets out to investigate the relationship between parental literacy levels and the literacy abilities of their children who were Grade 3 learners at a primary school in an impoverished area. The study initially hypothesised that there is a correlation between the literacy level of parents and the literacy abilities of their children. More specifically, it assumed that the higher the literacy levels of the parents, the stronger the literacy abilities of their Grade 3 child would be.

Methodologically, this study primarily uses a qualitative approach to generate data. Ten Grade 3 learners and their parents constituted the learner and parent sample, respectively, for the study. Learner selection was based on the results of a class teacher administered literacy test. This sample group constituted three learners with the highest test results; the three with the lowest test scores; and the four learners who had the mean score. Parent selection was based on the fact that their children were included in the learner sample.

It was found that the literacy level of the parent was not a significant factor in determining the literacy abilities of their children. A factor that was significant in influencing the literacy abilities of Grade 3 learners was the extent to which the learners had developed their conceptual understanding of the world beyond their immediate locality.

Those learners whose literacy abilities were satisfactory had greater access to the world beyond their immediate surroundings. Conversely, those learners who were unfamiliar with issues pertaining to the world beyond their immediate surroundings had a relatively low literacy score, suggesting low literacy abilities.

In essence, therefore, the case study failed to substantiate the initial hypothesis as the sole factor leading to literacy problems, but yet determined valid, measurable causes for the poor performance of Grade 3 learners at the school concerned.

DEDICATION

This study is dedicated to my late parents who gave me the opportunity to live my dreams.



DECLARATION

I declare that this research is my own unaided work. It is being submitted in partial fulfillment of the Masters in Education: Adult Learning and Global Change.

This research has not been submitted before for any degree or examination at any university.

.....
Jeffrey Phillip Arendse

Dated: 28 May 2007



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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

1. **W.C.E.D.** **Western Cape Education Department**
2. **D.o.E.** **Department of Education**
3. **NEPI** **National Education Policy Investigation**
4. **NAEP** **National Assessment of Educational Progress**
5. **OECD** **The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development**
6. **UCT** **University of Cape Town**
7. **Unesco** **United Nations Education, Science and Cultural Organization**



SECTION ONE INTRODUCTION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

This introductory section presents the principle issue of the research. It provides a rationale for the study; provides relevant historic background information regarding the origins and geographical location of Kalksteentfontein and sketches the socio-economic conditions prevailing within the area surrounding Primary School X. This section concludes with a statement on the purpose of the study.

1.2 RATIONALE AND THE LOCATION OF THE STUDY

Literacy testing at grade 3 level was a new initiative which the National Education Department introduced at all schools in the Republic of South Africa with the aim of ascertaining the literacy abilities of Grade 3 learners after the Department became aware of the poor literacy abilities of learners on completing primary schooling.

In 2004, all Grade 3 pupils in all government-funded and privately managed primary schools in the Western Cape had to comply with the Department of Education directive that Grade 3 learner's literacy abilities be tested to determine whether these learners had acquired the basic literacy skills that enable them to read and write with comprehension. The test was also administered to determine the overall reading abilities of these learners. The DoE's directive required that each learner be tested in his/her mother tongue by someone unknown to the learner.

In order to ensure that the above criteria were met, the literacy test was developed and administered by the Schools Development Unit at the University of Cape Town to ensure the independence and integrity of the testing processes and outcomes.

The outcome of the results at Primary School X was not encouraging. When the results were compared with two schools outside the immediate geographical area within which Primary School X is located, the results appeared even worse.

In communicating the results of the Test that focused on the literacy abilities of the Grade 3 learners at Primary School X, the Director of Educational Research within the Western Cape Education Department (WCED) indicated that only 10% of pupils had attained the minimum competence level in literacy (Present 2005a)¹.

The implication that only 10% had attained the minimum level of literacy competence implied that 90% of the pupils lack the key literacy skills that are critical for their future learning. The poor literacy abilities of learners at Primary School X was also disturbing since as Richardson correctly argues:

Literacy [is] a necessity of modernity. The capacity to read and write is causally associated with earning a living, achieving expanded horizons of personal enlightenment and enjoyment, maintaining a stable and democratic society, and historically, with the rise of civilization itself (1998: 115).

The centrality of reading skills to support learning and teaching is further articulated by Bettelheim and Zelan:

...of all school learning, nothing compares in importance with reading; it is of unparalleled significance. This is why the way it is taught is so important: The way in which learning to read is experienced by the child will determine how he will view learning in general, how he will conceive of himself as a learner and even as a person (1981: 5).

¹ Letter to school principals from Head: Education, dated 7 June, 2005, communicating the assessment of School X. School X.

Since very little prior knowledge was available on literacy, the researcher envisaged to investigate the link between the literacy levels of parents and the literacy abilities of learners in Grade 3 who attended a specific school.

As headmaster of a primary school located in the suburb of Kalksteefontein, a severely economically depressed area, the researcher was made startlingly aware of the glaring disparity between the results achieved in a national literacy survey by learners from a school in an impoverished area and those from more affluent areas. Having been the head of this institution for more than ten years, the researcher wanted to investigate why some learners were unable to excel even though they all have the tools to be successful in the end.

After the initial shock at the poor results achieved by these learners, the researcher began to reflect upon the factors that could have led to this disparity. Conversations with learners and their parents eventually directed the researcher to the tentative hypothesis that the poor results the learners achieved could be a direct consequence of the poor levels of literacy and academic support in the homes of the Grade 3 learners. The assumption underpinning the idea that parental literacy levels might influence literacy learning of children was informed by Peter Rule's (2006: 115) assertion that ***'children have an advantage when they grow up in homes where parents are literate and reading materials are available'***.

This assumption, in turn, resulted in the formulation of the title of this research study which attempts to investigate whether there exists a correlation between parental literacy levels and the Grade 3 learner's literacy abilities at Primary School X.

The realisation that learners at Primary School X might be marginalised due to poor literacy abilities prompted the researcher to check with surrounding schools whether they had also experienced a similar outcome. Whilst the primary schools in the immediate geographical area reflected similar results, those schools in more affluent areas showed otherwise.

On further systematic investigation the researcher discovered that 52% of pupils at Primary School Y, located in a middle class suburb, attained the minimum literacy competence, whilst 90% of pupils at Primary School Z, located in a previously white suburb, attained the minimum literacy level (Present 2005b).

The afore-mentioned results became a major concern to the authorities at the WCED because one could clearly see the disparities present at the different schools after the testing, even though the work presented in class was assumed uniform.

The low level of literacy was shocking since literacy skills are fundamental to all school based learning and if one ignores the problem then the future scholastic success of pupils at Schools X is doomed. In addition to acting as a barrier to scholastic learning, limited literacy levels also have other significant economic and social consequences. For example, Rule (2006: 115) argues that there exists a strong link between literacy and poverty:

Those who are illiterate are likely to be poor, either unemployed [...]. This is not to suggest that illiteracy causes poverty, but that the two phenomena are closely related: “the map of illiteracy, poverty and unemployment are beginning to mirror each other”.

This brings one to the focus of this study which is to investigate the poor literacy abilities of Grade 3 learners at Primary School X bearing in mind the investigation of the parental level of literacy.

The next section provides background information regarding the origin and socio- economic condition of the community within which Primary School X is located.

1.3 Historical Background of the Kalksteefontein Community

During the late 1960's, African and 'Coloured' people were forcefully removed from District Six as part of the apartheid legislation that reserved different residential areas for separate 'racial' or 'ethnic groups' (Group Areas Act of 1950). Many victims of the District Six removals find themselves in Kalksteefontein today.

A significant number of social analysts and public observers concur that the forced removals brought about a breakdown in the social fibre of the affected communities. This also seems to be true in the case of those who were relocated to Kalksteefontein. Many people became apprehensive of their neighbours who were initially seen as strangers. The social cohesion and communal support that characterised life in District Six was absent from Kalksteefontein. In fact, a sense of suspicion became prevalent within the newly established community and no stranger was trusted with anything. Not only were the people foreign to one another, they also had to put strategies in place, such as ensuring that their homes were not left unattended when the family went visiting. Families had to do this in order to protect their meager possessions.

1.3.1 Socio-Economic Conditions

A casual observer could safely conclude that the Kalksteefontein community is an extremely poor community. The nature of the social housing, the presence of unemployed and under-employed men and women who roam the streets during the day and night, and the limited formal commercial activity within the community are the signs that confirm this community as deprived of economic opportunities.

A survey conducted and initiated by School X, to determine the nature and extent of poverty amongst members of the school community in 1999 found that 60% of the parents of learners who attended the school were unemployed. This survey was carried out on the instructions from the W.C.E.D to determine the poverty level of this area. Once the data

had been collected, each school was then graded according to its poverty level. This took place at a time when the average unemployment rate in the province stood at approximately 25-30%. Since employment, in an urban context, is one of the few strategies through which people put food on the table, many people in this school community would not know where the next day's food would come from while they are unemployed.

A factor that adds to the economic debilitation within this community is that as soon some of the residence became relatively more stable economically, they often leave Kalksteefontein for an improved and more established area.

The above overview is offered in evidence that poverty is perceived to be rife in Kalksteefontein.

The concern about low literacy levels in Kalksteefontein seems to reflect a national trend. The general consensus is that education for a certain section of the population during the previous government's reign was below standard. The term 'gutter education' often surfaces in the discussion of this point. The relatively high level of adult illiteracy in South Africa is one of the legacies of apartheid policies. John Aitchison, drawing on the 1995 October Household Survey and the 1996 General Population Census, concludes that the national total illiteracy rate in South Africa is between 11% and 16 %. If one assumes that any individual with less than seven years of schooling is functionally illiterate then the illiteracy rate is between 28% and 32%. (Aitchison *et al* 2000: xiii)

The percentage for adult illiteracy amongst the poorer sections in South Africa is even higher. According to The National Education Policy Investigation (NEPI) Report on Adult Education (1993) there is a link between a lack of education and poverty. The report argues that 'many,

perhaps more than half, are school dropouts, unemployed or underemployed in informal sector activities' (NEPI: 1993 10).

The socio-economic and educational characteristics of Kalksteenfontein seem to mirror those characteristics highlighted by the NEPI Report. This in turn suggests the prevalence of high parental illiteracy in Kalksteenfontein.

A depressing concern, in terms of this study, is whether, by implication, children of Kalksteenfontein parents with low levels of literacy, living in deprived economic circumstances are doomed to repeat the cycle of poverty and illiteracy.

This picture seems too hopeless and bleak. Accordingly, this study will explore whether there are alternative explanations for the low literacy abilities of children at School X.



1.3.2 Physical location

Kalksteenfontein is a suburb that is physically isolated which in turn contributes to its social isolation. It is a few kilometers away from central Athlone but its unique location acts as a barrier against social integration.

Kalksteenfontein, the physical space, is relatively small. The suburb is squeezed between two railway lines, one to the North and the other to the West of the suburb. These railway lines are not only borders to the suburb, but also act as physical barriers that inhibit the community's sense of physical mobility and social interaction with its neighbours. Within a space of a few hundred metres, many factories can be seen. The road that forms the Eastern border of Kalksteenfontein services these factories. Being an arterial road providing access to the factories, it is extremely busy and dangerous for free mobility across the road to the

adjacent township, especially for young children. Young learners have already in the past, succumbed to road accidents very close to the school.

High unemployment together with physical and social isolation created the ideal conditions for the rise of the criminal economy. Social problems such as drug trafficking, alcoholism, and prostitution are common in this area. Many residents do not care about what happens around them and it somehow impacts negatively on everyone in the end. It seems as if Castells could have referred to Kalksteefontein in his assertion that wherever the 'most vulnerable segments' of society are socially excluded, there is 'an explosion of the criminal economy' and an decrease in 'its employment capacity' (Castells 1998).

1.4 THE PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The main purpose of this study is to investigate whether the relationship between parental literacy and the literacy abilities of Grade 3 learners in a primary school are significant or whether other relevant issues might be more significant during the process of literacy acquisition.

Furthermore, a secondary purpose of the study was to investigate how the social and physical environments of Grade 3 learners might influence the literacy abilities of these learners. The assumption that environmental factors might influence literacy learning is informed by Freier and Macedo's (1987) argument that literacy learning is enhanced when learners already have acquired the basic conceptual ideas underpinning the text to be read.

1.5 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The key limitation to this study is that the researcher is the principal at the Primary School X, the research site of the study. The perceived positional and institutional power of the researcher could have resulted in the respondents

providing information that they assumed the researcher wanted them to repeat. For example, since the researcher was known to the parents, children and the wider community, respondents could have presented their responses cautiously, hoping that these responses are consistent with the assumed expected results held by the researcher.

Another limitation was the hesitancy of some parents to express their views spontaneously. These parents assumed that only a certain level of discourse had to be utilised when interacting with a person in authority.

In order to ameliorate the influence of that institutional and positional power of authority could have had on the study, the researcher made sure that when interviewing the parents, he was dressed casually and that the language he used was in the register of the community, in this case the working class.

In terms of respondents struggling to express themselves coherently, the researcher encouraged them to use their mother tongue as well as the colloquial language of the community. One parent was able to do what she normally does in her home, which is smoking a cannabis cigarette while having all her grandchildren around her. This is evidence of the intimacy and trust situation the interviewer sought to achieve.

1.6 CONCLUSION

This section introduced the study; presented the purpose and limitations of the investigation and provided the background to the study.

The investigation starts with a review of relevant literature to locate the study theoretically.

SECTION TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This section presents a review of the content of selected literature which the researcher has found relevant to this study of the influence of parent literacy on the reading abilities of their children as well as investigating whether social and physical environmental factors are significant in the process of literacy acquisition.

It starts off by outlining different conceptions of literacy.

2.2 CONCEPTIONS OF LITERACY

In the literature, literacy is presented as a highly contested concept. The traditional perspective on literacy assumes that meaning is primarily created when the reader interacts with the written text (Hiebert 1991:1). In this conception, a non-literate person is the one who cannot read and write in his/her own language. Literacy, in this sense is perceived as a set of technical skills. Richardson critiques this conception of literacy and states that:

Traditionally literacy has been associated with an individual's ability to read and write. In everyday contexts literacy is invoked in these terms – a view which regards literacy as a set of asocial individual cognitive skills dislodged from their socio-cultural moorings in human relationships and communities of practice. By neglecting the role and the constitutive influence of situation, activities and participants, literacy becomes a set of skills necessary for individuals to undertake reading and writing (1998: 116).

Unesco, in 1958, included a cognitive dimension to the traditional understanding of literacy through defining the non-literate person as a person 'who cannot, *with understanding*, both read and write a short, simple statement on his everyday life' (Matcahzi 1987, in Clifftort 2000: 70, italics added),

Converse to the idea that literacy is about the technical ability to read and write Giroux (1987: 7) argues that for Freire and Macedo literacy is not a technical skill but is:

.... part of the process of becoming self-critical about the historically constructed nature of one's experience. To be able to name one's experience is part of what is meant to "read" the world and begin to understand the political nature of the limits and possibilities that make up the larger society.

This suggests that literacy is a political act through which people predict, analyse and make sense of the world they live in. In this sense literacy could be viewed as the act or the way of thinking that is culturally and context dependent.

The assertion that literacy is context and culturally dependent and particular to a specific society brings into question the validity of any standardised assessment of literacy abilities that ignores those factors. Even though a standardised test and its results need to be problematised, this study has not pursued this issue since the researcher failed to gain access to the actual literacy test and the completed scripts.

The idea that literacy is not a decontextulised activity is emphasised by Freire and Macedo in their argument that:

Reading does not consist merely of decoding the written word or language; rather, it is preceded by and intertwined with knowledge of the world. Language and reality are dynamically connected. (1987: 29).

In reflecting on them being introduced to the practice of reading, Freire and Macedo show the importance of first knowing their 'world' before they could

read the 'word'. They recount the importance of learning from their siblings, elders, physical and social environments, through play, stories and myth. These interactions provided them with the language and concepts that became the building blocks for them reading the 'word', in written text (Freire and Macedo 1987: 29-32).

They conclude:

*My parents introduced me to reading the word at a certain moment in this rich experience of understanding my immediate world. Deciphering the word flowed naturally from reading my particular world; it was not something superimposed on it. I learned to read and write on the ground of the backyard of my house, [...] with **words from my world rather than from the wider world of my parents** (Freire and Macedo 1987: 32, emphasis in bold added).*

The perspective of a dialectic relationship between knowing the world and reading the word is supported by Cline and Necochea (2003) in them recalling how they became literate.

Cline reports that whilst she is an 'avid reader and writer' she comes from a family where books were not central to their everyday living experiences. Even though her parents could read, she seldom saw them reading. She believes that the foundation for her reading is to be found in the rich oral tradition of her family, particularly conveyed through story telling:

Such stories laid the foundation for a strong family history, traditions, pride and love for a country and the people left behind. [Stories] were told with passion, rich vocabulary, and complex sentences. These were not simple emergent reader stories but stories that delved into the complexity of the human mind and spirit. (Cline and Necochea 2003: 123)

The assertions that reading is context dependent and facilitates conceptual understanding, is critical to this study in that one needs to examine the relationship between the context of school literacy and the context of the lived world of the learners. Learners often speak a different language at home. When they are at school, educators often try and present the 'word' as it ought to be spoken by everyone. This is a major problem which many learners experience. School literacy is frequently foreign for those learners not sharing the cultural capital, including the ethos of the school and its teaching staff.

Freire and Macedo (1987) as well as Cline and Necochea (2003) highlight the critical importance of expanding the conceptual world of learners for successfully reading the word. Cline and Necochea further show that a strong oral culture is beneficial in promoting literacy skills:

I did not realize then that the tradition of story telling that is so strong in so many Latin and African cultures could be just as important as reading books to promote literacy and a love for reading and writing within the family (2003: 123).

The assertion of Cline and Necochea (2003) signals the importance of story telling in conceptual development. However, one also needs to investigate the relationship between the stories experienced amongst school learners, and its relevance and usage in the literacy practices at school.

The above arguments point to the fact that literacy is not primarily about the development of technical reading and writing skills, rather, literacy is about the development of culturally appropriate ways of thinking. Such a perspective is consistent with Vygotsky's (1962, in Brunner 1986) notion of the centrality of language and culture as critical tools for learning and understanding.

Cline and Necochea reinforce the idea that conceptual clarity becomes critical for future learning. They recall how the tradition of singing for their mothers'

friends exposed them through song, to their culture, country of their birth and a connection with the rest of their communities. These interactions became the building blocks for their 'passion for life ... excitement with the written and spoken word' (Cline & Necochea, 2003). The value of Cline and Necochea's research for literacy development lies in the fact that they emphasise the importance of story telling and the development of relevant cultural education for children.

Notwithstanding the contested nature of literacy, Freire and Macedo, (1987) maintain that literacy is not value free. They state:

Literacy in this case often aims at providing working-class and minority kids with reading and writing skills that will make them functional and critical within the school environment.

Both Freire and Machedo (1987) as well as Cline and Necochea's (2003) perspective on literacy challenge the perception that parental literacy might significantly influence the literacy abilities of their children. These theorists rather suggest that the way children develop conceptual language become a greater factor in literacy acquisition than the literacy level of the parents. This is one of the questions the study has examined.

2.3 A NEW CONCEPTION OF LITERACY

The new conceptions of literacy recognise that literacy is 'interactive, constructive, strategic, and meaning-based' (Steelman, Pierce, and Koppenhaven, 1994:201). Steelman *et al* maintain the notion that comprehension and use of written text is central to literacy. Their definition of literacy suggests that: ***'To be literate is to be able to gather and to construct meaning using written language' (1994:201).***

Others emphasise the importance of oral development as a strategy towards conceptual development and to act as the foundation to understand and interact with the written language. Foley, for example, argues that:

...the term 'literacy' can be used broadly to refer to the mastery of language in either its spoken (or augmented) and written forms, which enables an individual to use language fluently for a variety of purposes. (1994:184)

Furthermore, literacy is placed in such a position that it is aligned with an individual and not with a group in society of which this individual is a member. The onus hence seems to be on the individual to undertake reading and writing. It begins with the 'desire to get information, send messages, record knowledge and develop ideas'. Reading and writing are social activities just like listening and speaking (Dixon and Tuladhar undated: 11).

It is at this juncture where it dawns on individuals to undertake reading and writing. Therefore, once individuals have acquired these skills that enable them to read and write very early in life, it would serve as an opportunity to tackle many situations that they might encounter in the future and not experience problems that might come their way (Vygotsky 1962).

According to Street (1995), social literacies suggest that engaging with literacy makes the connection that is being established with others, a social act even from the outset. The way teachers and their learners interact is already a social practice that affects the nature of the literacy being learned and the ideas about literacy held by the participants, especially the new learners and their position in relation of power.

Many people have a very narrow definition of literacy. They see literacy as a personal skill that is used by schooled individuals. However, it is important to know that literacy is a social as well as a personal skill. People participate in reading and writing activities together. Two people will always be involved in a literacy activity; one being the reader and the other the writer. The ability to read and write extends our ability to think and talk as well as to listen. Literacy allows one to use another way to communicate with others.

In this study, following Freire and Macedo (1987), literacy is defined as a set of social and personal skills that is preceded by and intertwined with knowledge and experiences of the world, which allows one to decode written words and language within social contexts.

2.3.1 THE INFLUENCE OF MOTHERS ON LITERACY DEVELOPMENT

After recognising that success at schools have multiple variables, Baker and Stevenson maintain that mother's educational level significantly influence their children's success at school (1998). They maintain that the role of the mother in supporting their children's schooling careers cannot be over emphasised.

This perspective is supported by both Sticht (1999) and Justice (2005). Sticht (1999) goes further and argues that educating the children's parents would lead to better educated, more employable parents, and more educable children. He concludes by saying, '**Better educated parents produce better educated children**' (1999).

Justice (2005), on the other hand, argues that children with parents (especially mothers) who can read and write stay in school longer and perform better than those children whose parents lack literacy skills.

In the same vein, Benjamin (1993) found that low-literate parents, particularly mothers, are more likely to exert a positive influence on their children's academic achievement when they are able to enhance their own literacy skills than when they are unable to do so. This is further supported by Sticht & McDonald (1990), who argue that traditional research has revealed that more highly educated mothers have greater success in providing their children with the cognitive and language skills that contribute to early success in school.

From the above one might assume that it is because of the literacy skills of the parents that their children perform better at school, but Pop (1992)

contradicts this assumption by his explanation that children of educated mothers tend to succeed in school because their mothers have more knowledge about how schools function and what is needed to succeed in it. This suggests that those who share the schooling discourse are more successful in practices such as school literacy.

Edwards & Garcia (1991) also support the idea that mothers have a significant influence on supporting literacy acquisition of their children. According to Edwards and Garcia (1991) mothers ought to model effective book-reading practices so that their children could emulate these practices.

However, Goodman (1997) expresses a cautionary note by stating that he is convinced that literacy skills are acquired through multiple ways. Parental support is only one of the ways of developing literacy skills. These ways might include parents reading to their children; society encouraging the practice of parents reading to their children to ensure that development in literacy among children will continue.

Whilst Edwards (1994) in general supports the notion that parental reading to children is crucial for successful literacy acquisition, he suggests that parents should become 'good literate models' to their children and teach them the 'rituals, verbal interaction patterns and other skills which the children can apply in their reading practices'. Edwards mentions 'verbal interaction patterns', as part of the process of modeling. This oral practice is not normally associated with reading practices but is consistent with theorists who argue that language skills development (Freire and Machado 1987; Street 1994) is critical to literacy practice.

Darling (1988) maintains the importance of parents reading to their children regularly. He argues that if children are not read to regularly, they would be disadvantaged at school and be regarded as slow learners.

2.3.2 BASICS TO LITERACY ACQUISITION

In discussing the importance of literacy for future educational development Justice (2005: 1) states that literacy has not in the past been viewed as critical to the development of children. However, in the context of the USA, he reports that over 40% of the fourth graders struggle with literacy, even at basic levels. Justice continues and reports that studies 'increasingly' concluded that 'early education' should be used as the 'context in which solution to [the literacy] problems are most likely to have effect (2005: 1).

Justice (2005: 2) draws on USA based studies to conclude that successful oral language development is essential for successful literacy development. These oral skills, according to Justice ought to be developed within the kindergarten.

The need for early language development is supported by Mason and Allen, (1986) and Mason (1987) who argue that children who learn to read early, either indirectly through home and family experiences, or directly through formal beginning reading programs implemented in preschool and kindergartens, are typically good readers in the primary grades. Mason (1987) continues and argues that those who received the kindergarten reading instruction had better grades, attendance, and attitudes toward reading, as well as less need for remediation.

However, if one reflects on the Kalksteenfontein community then there seems to be a correlation between poverty and low literacy abilities of the children in Kalksteenfontein. Many parents in this community have a low education base and these parents, who are mostly unemployed, can ill afford to send their children to kindergarten class because they do not have the means to pay for such services.

Bus (1995) acknowledges how important family life is in promoting literacy as well as the intergenerational nature of literacy programmes.

She mentions that this is an attempt to test the basic assumption of many programs that parent-child interaction around books is important in promoting a literate orientation.

Bus also highlights the importance of book reading and how the strength of the relationship between parent and preschooler reading and outcome measures is comparable to the no word effect on reading problems. She continues by saying that book reading is as strong a predictor of reading achievement as is phonemic awareness. Once children are able to read on their own then the mission of having learners read has been accomplished.

The Harvard Families and Literacy Study Chall & Snow (1982) investigated the home literacy practices of successful and unsuccessful low-income elementary school students in order to identify factors that contribute to the acquisition of literacy and children's achievement in school. The study found 'no simple correlation between parents literacy level, educational background, amount of time spent on literacy work with children, and overall achievement.'

2.3.3 ROLE OF ORAL LANGUAGE IN LITERACY DEVELOPMENT

Justice (2005) clearly shows what an important role oral literacy plays in the lives of children. Learners should at a very early age be allowed to express how they feel. If it is allowed then these learners will excel in future. Clear guidance is expected from those in authority to assist in this approach. Parents need to guide their children by talking to them on a regular basis about the importance of literacy. This can take place during early learning when children are susceptible and able to consume a lot of positive information. It is the time when pre-alphabetic competencies can be introduced and absorbed for future usage. Once they understand these competencies, decoding of instructions will be very easy.

Children need to know how important it is for them to be involved in literacy activities because from that point, everything will have meaning for them in future. Once they understand what is expected of them, the children would acquire the skills necessary to continue with language development. It would be a base from which learners would be able to devise strategies for the future usage of language. The classroom is a unique context for learning and exerts a profound effect on students' development of language on literacy skills.

Justice (2005) mentions that children who have an under-developed oral language base will exhibit great vulnerability for achieving reading competence, which in turn inhibits ongoing language development. It is also much more difficult to remediate reading problems than it is to prevent it.

2.3.4 LITERACY DEVELOPMENT AND PERSONAL, SOCIAL DEVELOPEMT



Sticht (1988) confirms the important role played by mothers who have been able to attain high levels of education. This in turn implies that with data gathered from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), these mothers will assist their children by seeing that they also become successful. This is not the case at School X because most mothers here depend entirely on the educator to educate their children because they are unable to do so.

Swed (1981) referred to the importance of reading and writing and how children will one day be able to earn a living and contribute to their world in a positive way.

Cline and Nocochea (2003) were excited about the current reform movements that were taking place yet concerned about story telling that was being ignored. Story- telling by adults would surely encourage learners to remember what had happened in the past. This would allow

legacies to be taken into the future enabling children to share information with others.

2.3.5 PARENT INVOLVEMENT AND SUPPORT

There are several studies which have highlighted the powerful effects of a mother's literacy on her children's' development and scholastic achievements.

It was found that when mothers are able to remain at school a little longer than their peers, they were able to cut the infant mortality rate and raise the health conditions of their children. (Justice 2005)

A number of studies suggest very strongly that early childhood development is severely compromised when parents are unable to provide an "ideal" learning environment (Benjamin 1993; Edwards and Garcia 1991; Edwards 1994; Darling 1988). These studies have demonstrated the impact of a lack of parent education on the physical health and development of the child; they have also demonstrated that learners without a solid grounding in literacy from pre-school levels demonstrate the negative results of this loss right through secondary and tertiary studies.

Edwards (1994) established a group of mothers who were willing to model effective book reading practices. This in turn made them open to criticism and suggestions from other parents. These criticisms were used as guides for reading the following year.

None of the studies identified, however, sets out to demonstrate quantitatively that a direct correlation exists between parent literacy levels and abilities and the literacy achievements of their children. The idea that such a correlation exists has been implied, nay even assumed, but has not been demonstrated. It is the purpose of this study to test the hypothesis that correlation is real.

Padak and Rasinski (2003), gives a positive report that one component positively impacts on the other. It also tells us how the concept of family literacy is firmly rooted in a substantial research base from several disciplines including adult literacy, child development, emergent literacy and system analysis. The results show that family literacy programmes work and that children, parents, families and society benefit. Children are able to achieve higher scores at school because of the importance parents attach to education.

The desirability of such family involvement and dedication is self evident in the context of the concerns of this study. It is also clear, however, that the opportunities for the creation of such an ideal environment within the Kalksteefontein environment are remote.

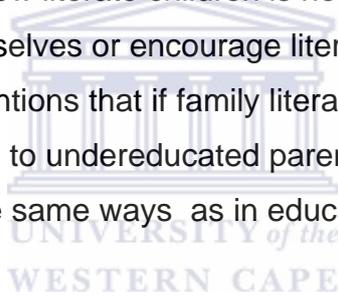
The Education Research Report (1993) explains clearly why children succeed or fail at school. Traditional research has therefore shown how important a mother's level of education is and how it impacts on the children's reading level as well as other school achievements.

One study of parental involvement based on a model of children reading to parents found that those who read to their parents on a regular basis made greater gains than children receiving an equivalent amount of extra reading instructions by reading specialists at school (Tizard, Schofield & Hewison, 1982).

Auerbach, (1989), highlighted the importance of children bonding with parents, the emotional climate as it is at home, the amount of time spent interacting with adults as well as the parents' involvement at the school, shows it had a positive influence on such children's reading.

Baker and Stevens (1986), give reasons why children of educated parents succeed in school. It can be ascribed to parents especially mothers being au fait and having the knowledge as to how schools

function. Educated parents know how to assist their children with homework and what they teach their children what they need to know in their grades. Parents make a point to attend parent-teacher conferences and they attend Parent Teacher Association meetings. The same cannot be said about less educated parents. The amount of parental involvement in the school activities of their children influences their development. Where there are a large number of books in the home, parents tend to read to their children on a regular basis. Where a shortage of books is visible in a home, it would imply that regular reading does not take place there. Valencia, Henderson and Rankin (1985), emphasise the importance of family time and what impact both parents have on their children. Single mothers hardly have time for their children resulting in a lot more stress than those who are in stable relations. And giving books to low literate children is no guarantee that they will start reading by themselves or encourage literacy development in children. Heath(1983) mentions that if family literacy programmes introduce new literacy practices to undereducated parents, those practices may not be interpreted in the same ways as in educated, middle class families.



Cline and Necochea empathize the importance of mother tongue language development to ensure successful literacy development:

Although it may not be recognized in the popular literature, our parents and families did a few things right. They insisted that we maintain our primary language; therefore, we were able to develop the deep structures of language. Our parents told us stories in their language of passion, which was also their language of success and love. In doing so, they taught us the multiple ways that language can be used to express feelings, emotions, ideas, concerns, and knowledge. We were taught how to identify flowery expressions, metaphors, dialogue, and deep structures. We listened to these family stories and internalized the language of our homes and ancestors. These family literacy experiences became the foundations for our future success (Cline & Necochea 2003).

2.6 CONCLUSION

This section reviewed some of the literature relevant to this study. The literature presents a strong argument for parental support in developing literacy abilities amongst young children. However, this does not suggest that the literacy level of the parents is necessarily important. Rather, the more familiar parents are with the culture of schooling practices, the more successful their children will be in tasks associated with schooling.

In terms of literacy development, a convincing perspective is presented that oral language and conceptual development are far more decisive in literacy development



SECTION 3 METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This section discusses the methodology selected for the study. The study uses primarily the qualitative approach to generate data.

3.2 RATIONALE FOR ADOPTING A QUALITATIVE APPROACH

This study is a qualitative study that endeavours to ascertain the influence of parental literacy as well as the influence of social and physical environmental factors on the literacy abilities of Grade 3 learners. Although this sounds like a different thesis statement, it is not, as the premise is still grounded on the connection between parental input and the children's literacy levels.

Myers supports the use of qualitative research methods whenever social and cultural phenomena are being examined (2002: 2). One of the main strengths of the qualitative research methodology is that it gives the researcher insight into how social, environmental and cultural contexts influence human behavior. When investigating cultural or social phenomenon, the quantitative research methodology may have major limitations since the quantification of textual data results in the loss of the particular social and institutional contexts within which the social phenomenon takes place (Myers, 2001:2).

Brannin and Fiest (1997) argue that the primary advantage of qualitative research is that qualitative data can yield valuable insight into the lives and experiences of participants, as it provides a comprehensive and in depth analysis of the phenomenon under investigation.

Halpin and Troyna (1994:5) criticise the quantitative approach to social research in that this approach has a technicist conception of research and

focuses purely and simply on how to attend to empirical projects. The limitation of this approach, in the social sciences, is that the technicalities of research are artificially detached from the political, ethical and social arena (Halpin and Troyna (1994:5). However, Hysemen (1994) cautions that the disadvantage of qualitative research is that it is more difficult and time consuming to collect, analyse and categorise.

Since the study is limited to School X, a case study methodology has been chosen to illuminate the nature of different environmental factors on the literacy learning of children at the specific school. In this case, School X,

The case study, as a qualitative method, allows one to explore the way in which parents of children at School X contribute to the literacy abilities of their children. Drawing on Yin (1994), Hendricks argues that the case study methodology allows one to engage with 'contemporary phenomena' within real-life contexts, especially when the boundaries between the phenomenon and context are not clearly evident (2001: 74).

Quantitative information, on the other hand, will not give one insight into the relationship between parental literacy and the literacy abilities of their children.

3.3 METHODS USED TO GENERATE THE DATA

This study followed a qualitative approach which was guided and anchored in the interpretive paradigm. This school of thought promotes an inductive mode of enquiry and encourages the use of a variety of data collection techniques. McMillan and Schumacher (2001:395) describe interactive qualitative research as follows: An enquiry in which the researcher collects data in face to face situations by reacting with selected persons in their settings. Qualitative research describes and analyses people's individual and collective social actions, beliefs, thoughts and perceptions. This study interpreted perspectives and views from the participants regarding literacy development. The chosen data collection included interviews and questionnaires. These interactive data collection strategies enabled the researcher to gain rich and detailed

descriptions of the participants' (i.e. parents and learners) response to literacy development.

The researcher approached the Grade 3 class teacher and requested that all the learners be tested on their literacy abilities. The class teacher responded positively to this request.

Once everyone was tested, the researcher selected a group of ten learners to constitute a learner sample. This consisted of three of the best readers, four who were average and three who were very weak in the reading test. All these learners were given fictitious names to protect their identity and so ensure that confidentiality was maintained.

The learner selection was based on their performance in the teacher administered test since the WCED commissioned literacy and a numeracy test, which was administered in 2004, did not provide information on performance of individual learners. Rather the WCED commissioned literacy test provided the average literacy score for the entire Grade 3 learners at School X.

The criteria for selection included three (3) learners whose tests scores were the best within the class, suggesting their reading abilities were the highest; four (4) learners from the same class whose performance were average; and three (3) learners whose test results were the lowest, implying that these learners were deficient in their reading abilities.

After having selected the 10 learners, the researcher requested permission from the parents to include the selected learners in the study as well as the parent's willingness to become part of the study. The parents and learners acceded to the request and gave their full co-operation.

Throughout the process of data gathering, the researcher remained aware of his institutional position of power and authority in relation to the learners and their parents (Delpit 1995: 24-26). There were times when it became necessary for the researcher to remain focused especially when interviews

were undertaken. The researcher experienced moments of not being able to distinguish between the times when he was principal and when he was the researcher. Throughout the interview process the researcher remained aware of the fact that being the principal of the school which is being investigated, he conveys, through his presence, a sense of institutional authority and power. This institutional authority and power might affect the anticipated results/outcomes in one way or another. To avoid any effect on the outcome/results, the researcher created a comfortable atmosphere by having the interviews in a separate room in which comfortable chairs were used and refreshments were offered. In order for the researcher and the participants to be at ease, the researcher explained in a very simple way what his intentions with the interviews were and that no one would be pressurised to participate in the study against their will. The researcher further assured the key informants that he would ensure that they remained anonymous throughout the study as well as in subsequent reports emanating from the study.

3.4 QUESTIONNAIRES

As mentioned above, questionnaires were used to gather data from both parents and learners. Different questionnaires were designed for the two groups.

A questionnaire is an appropriate research method to extrapolate data in a general way. However, the researcher is unable to clarify responses or gather additional information from respondent.

The learner questionnaire intended to determine, in the first instance, whether their parents or a more experienced sibling was reading to the learners or assisting them in some way to acquire literacy skills. Secondly the questionnaire was designed to determine the extent to which learners were familiar with their immediate and extended social environments. The assumption underlying these questions related to learners' knowledge about their environments was that those learners who have developed their language competencies through the development of naming their world, would be more

competent in their reading abilities than those who have not (Freire and Machado 1987).

All ten (10) selected learners completed the questionnaire that was administered by the researcher, thus ensuring that the total number of questionnaires was returned after completion.

With the parent's questionnaire the researcher wanted to determine the extent to which parents were involved in their children's literacy development as well as determining the literacy level of the selected parents. Parents were amongst others, asked how often they support their children with their homework, whether they accompany their children to the library, whether they have the resources to support them whilst doing their homework, as well as determining what other educational support is available for their children.

Since the parents were extremely enthusiastic about being selected to be part of the study, they all completed the questionnaire.

3.5 INTERVIEWS

The researcher interviewed both learners and parents. The intention of the interview was to clarify and ask follow-up questions which had some relevance to the questionnaire. Accordingly, the interview was unstructured and open-ended.

Again parents showed a high level of enthusiasm to be interviewed since they were under the impression that the researcher was about to introduce new ideas with regard to literacy that would benefit their children in the future. However, when they realised that the interview was to investigate whether the literacy abilities of the children is influenced by the support of the parental involvement, they became a bit more hesitant because of their inability to conceptualise their role in the improvement of their children's literacy abilities. The researcher then had to assure the parents that their contribution to the study might contribute to improving the literacy abilities of children in general.

3.6 DATA ANALYSIS

As previously described, this study used qualitative methods to collect data. Sixteen open-ended questions were posed to the parents whilst learners were asked eighteen open-ended questions.

The qualitative information extrapolated from these open-ended questions was analysed by means of content analysis. This involves the search for, and indication of recurring themes. More specifically, the open ended questions were content analysed on a thematic basis and these themes were presented as categories.

3.7 ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF THE STUDY

3.7.1 ADVANTAGES OF THIS STUDY



There were definitely advantages within this study for everyone that had a concern and interest in Literacy and Numeracy because never before has something similar to this case been executed in Kalksteefontein. The results that would be found here would serve as a guide for both educators and parents as to how they can assist their children in the future. Other people in surrounding areas could also gain from these experiences because Education and Literacy are universal and of benefit for anyone.

3.7.2 DISADVANTAGES OF THIS STUDY

Since this is the first time that a study of this nature is being conducted in Kalksteefontein, parents were understandably very apprehensive to want to participate in this venture. Many did not realise that there was a problem with literacy abilities of their children until the researcher came and discussed it with some of them. Secondly, because many of the

parents, who participated in the study, have not attained high levels of education, they did not know what their expectations are and how they should react to what the researcher, who is known to all of the parents, would ask in his questioning session with them. Many of the parents felt more at ease when approached by someone who is known to them.

3.8 RESEARCH PARADIGM

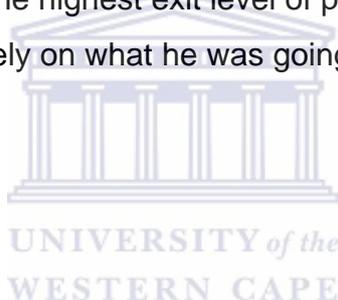
Strict limitations have been set with regard to the paradigm of this study. Only learners and their parents from the Grade 3 class have become eligible for this testing. No one else would be entered into it.

Only parents and learners who stayed in the Kalksteefontein Area were part of this core group. Since the highest exit level of parents were unknown to the researcher, he had to rely on what he was going to receive once the parents were interviewed.

3.9 RESPONDENTS

This study was aimed at both the parents and their children who are in Grade 3. What the researcher experienced though, was the fact that he did not get all the anticipated answers which he interpreted as being common knowledge for both the parents and their children.

It was important for the researcher to always keep in mind what the results were for the other two schools, schools Y and Z, which he approached. Knowing what their results were, brought about a lot of mixed emotions from within. Even though the researcher did not do any testing at schools Y and Z, he knew that they had better scores than his learners simply because those learners were situated in areas which were better socially, economically and culturally.



3.10 CONCLUSION

This section presented a rationale for the selected methodology. It further identified the strengths and limitations of the selected research instruments. The next section presents the findings of the study



SECTION 4

RESEARCH FINDINGS ON THE LITERACY ABILITIES OF PRIMARY SCHOOL LEARNERS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This section explores the multiple factors that influence the learning of literacy skills of primary school learners. In particular, it reports on and analyses the findings of the relationship between parental literacy levels and their children's literacy abilities. Furthermore, this section examines the relationship between conceptual development, which results from the learner's social and physical environments, and literacy learning.

4.2 THE INFLUENCE OF PARENTAL LITERACY LEVELS

It is commonly assumed that the higher the parental educational levels and parental involvement in literacy activities, the more successful their children perform at school (Stitch and MacDonald 1990; Padak and Resinski 2003). This assumption seems to be true in the North American and Western Europe educational contexts where parental involvement include parents' participation in parent-teacher conferences that expose parents to how the school functions and operates (Baker and Stevens 1986). Knowledge of the cultural capital of how schools function is used to assist their children with homework and other school related activities.

Parental involvement in school related activities is sorely lacking at School X and accordingly, knowledge of the cultural capital related to schooling is then obviously absent amongst the parents. For example, it is also a continuous problem to get parents to Parent-Teacher Meetings where important matters pertaining to the progress of their children are often discussed (Researcher's personal experience over at least 10 years as principal of a primary school). As the principal at School X the researcher concludes that it seems that some parents of School X have a limited interest in knowing how the school operates.

An aspect that is being explored is whether the parental literacy levels can explain the observed literacy level of their children. In this study it was found that the learner, Sandra², with the highest literacy ability, according to literacy Test administered by the class teacher, has a guardian with limited formal schooling that translates into the guardian having limited reading and writing competence.

Conversely, the study found that those parents with the highest literacy levels left school in Grade 11, but their children's literacy abilities were average.

In the case of the learner with the second best test score, meaning the literacy ability of the learner was relatively good, the parent of this learner completed schooling at Grade10.

In the table below, the literacy test scores of the ten selected learners and the educational level of their parents/guardians are represented and examined. It should be noted that the test scores are those generated by the class teacher since the literacy results of the test sanctioned by the WCED only provided the average literacy score for the entire population of Grade 3 learners in 2003 at School X.

Table 1: Literacy scores of selected learners and educational level of parents/guardians

<u>NAME OF LEARNERS</u>	<u>PERCENTAGE ATTAINED</u>	<u>PARENTS EDUCATIONAL LEVEL</u>
No.1 Sandra	80%	Grade 4
No. 2 Monique	45%	Grade 10
No.3 Mark	40%	Grade 5
No.4 Thelma	30%	Grade 7
No. 5 Ebrahim	25%	Grade 6

² Please note that the names used are not the actual name of the learners. These names are only used to assist comprehension.

No. 6	Rosaline	32%	Grade 8
No. 7	Michael	30%	Grade 11
No.8	Alana	8%	Grade 9
No. 9	Claude	5%	Grade 8
No.10	Fatima	5%	Grade 9

From the above table, it is evident that a direct correlation between parental educational attainment and their children's literacy abilities is not obvious. It may seem that in the case of Ebrahim, whose literacy score is 25% with his parent's educational level pegged at grade 6, some correlation exists. Similarly, Fatima's literacy score of 5% and Alana's 8% may be attributed to their parent's educational level of Grade 9. However, in the case of Michael whose parent attained a Grade 11 qualification, his literacy score was only 30%. Conversely, Sandra scored 80% in the literacy test and her guardian has only attained a Grade 4 qualification.

In the case of Rosaline and Claude, even though both their parents completed Grade 8, the former scored 32% and the latter scored 5% in the literacy test. However, if Fatima's 5% is compared with Monique's 45% and taking into account that their parents' educational levels are Grade 9 and 10 respectively, then questioning the significant difference between the literacy scores of these two learners is justified when one assumes a correlation between parental literacy level and their children's literacy abilities.

One learner, i.e. Sandra, was the only one who had a high score yet her guardian had no influence on her reading ability given the fact that she left school at Grade 4. No correlation can be observed between the guardian's educational level and the learner's score.

When one looks at the educational levels of those parents who were able to leave school at secondary school level, then the expectations would be that their children ought to be able to read confidently. Yet, it was not the case. Monique, Michael and Fatima should have had better literacy scores given the

fact that their parents were able to complete some level of secondary schooling. In the case of Monique whose mother practically escorts her every fortnight to the library, yet her literacy score is not that impressive. Michael on the other hand clearly shows a disinterest in reading because he is left by himself every afternoon because there is always no one home by the time school dismisses. Fatima is a girl who is repeating her Grade and is older than the average learner in the class. Having to fend for herself and not being able to read, frustrates her to the extent that she plays with friends until late in the evening.

The last three learners had very low literacy scores yet their parents had the competency to assist their children. Alana and Fatima were from single parent families. Both mothers incidentally worked long hours in a clothing factory, therefore making assistance towards the education of their children almost impossible. Not having someone to take care of them after school, worsens matters even further.

From the above analysis of the data regarding the relationship between parental literacy levels and their children's literacy abilities, this study found that no definitive relationship was evident. Rather, a number of contradictions were prevalent.

The finding, in this case study, that no conclusive relationship between parental literacy levels and the literacy abilities of their children was evident does not suggest that the parental literacy level is not significant in the literacy abilities of their children. On the contrary, parental literacy levels might be significant if the parents are actively involved in the processes of literacy learning of their children. However, this study did not focus, in detail, on the parental involvement in teaching their children literacy. Notwithstanding this limitation, the finding does suggest that alternative explanations need to be explored to explain why, for example, Sandra, whose guardian had limited schooling, excelled in the literacy test, whilst Michael, whose parent who left school at Grade 11, performed average in the literacy test.

4.4 THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS ON LITERACY

The study found that learners who are socially active achieved the highest scores on the literacy testing. Those learners who have the most active social life and interacted with various and diverse groups of people achieved the highest scores on the literacy test. Conversely, those learners whose social and worldly experiences are limited performed poorly.

For example, the literacy test suggests that Sandra has the highest literacy abilities, if one assumes the test scores reflects the literacy abilities of the Grade 3 learners. As discussed previously, Sandra's grandmother, who is her guardian, is functionally non-literate, and accordingly impacted to a limited degree on her literacy achievements. However, an explanation for her success could be found in her interaction with other people as well as physical spaces other than those in and around Kalksteefontein.

Sandra, due to the conditions at her home - being poor and living from hand to mouth, was forced to beg for money to support the rest of the family financially. In pursuing her 'craft' she became a regular beggar in Camps Bay, one of the prime tourist attractions in the broader Cape Town area that draws a number of national and international tourists.

In pursuing her 'craft', Sandra had to learn the basics of approaching tourists and encourage these tourists to converse with her. Sandra would and tell them (tourists) interesting stories which would capture their interests and preparedness to part with their money. Through regular interaction with the tourists, Sandra developed a broader understanding of the world beyond Cape Town and Kalksteefontein. For example, through listening to the different accents of tourist, she was able to immediately identify the country of origin of the tourists and so initiate a conversation about that country. By interacting with tourists from a number of countries she developed a comparative sense of the differences and similarities between these countries. These interactions

contributed to Sandra's vocabulary as well as her knowledge of the various countries.

Tourists also prodded her to talk about herself, her family, and the areas where she lives and so on. Her responses to these questions made her realise that people were interested in her as a person. These experiences affected her as a person in a positive way because she was able to get money from those people with whom she communicated.

Following Freire and Machado (1987), the experiences of traveling from Kalksteefontein to Camps Bay and interacting with the social and physical environments broaden Sandra's conceptual world that became a resource in her literacy practices.

Similarly, the life world of Monique is filled with people from different walks of life. Her mother owns a tavern that is frequented by men and women on a regular basis. The tavern becomes a place for contemporary social and political discussions that are frequently overheard by Monique. Furthermore, her mother regularly interacts with a diverse group of people at the hairdresser in a community adjacent to Kalksteefontein. The ideas that are communicated at the hairdresser are then shared and/or discussed at home where Monique becomes an active listener and participant in the conversations. Both the tavern experiences and the relayed experiences at the hairdresser contribute in the conceptual development of Monique.

The contact Monique has with her mother's customers enabled her to see the world beyond Kalksteefontein from different perspectives. Monique in turn could regularly talk to her mother about whom she had spoken to outside her home. The mother could also guide her daughter about life beyond the home environment.

It is interesting to note that Monique scored the second highest mark in the literacy test.

Conversely, Claude, Fatima and Alana were the ones who scored the lowest in the literacy testing. On examining how broad the conceptual world of these three learners were, it was discovered that they are unfamiliar with a number of local, national and international events that they were suppose to have knowledge of. For example, when Claude, Fatima and Alana were asked about their knowledge regarding world events, locally and abroad they, in all instances, claimed ignorance. In Claude's words, regarding a well known event, the killing of Ashley Kriel, who lived in a community adjacent to Kalksteefontein and a member of the then banned African National Congress military wing, died in a shoot out with police in the late eighties: "I never heard the name or what happened to him" (interviewed 26 September 2006). Similarly, Fatima and Alana could not talk about one of any significant national or international event or happening.

Below is a depiction of the live world of the other participants in the study.

Mark is average with regard to his literacy abilities yet his father, who assists him regularly, exited school at Grade 5. His father has since decided to enroll himself in part-time studies to improve his present working conditions and earn more money to support his family. Mark gives the impression that he has no aspirations to improve his literacy skills knowing that when he comes from school daily, that there is no one to assist him with his homework. Both his parents work during the day and come home very late.

Thelma battled to stay abreast with her reading because her grandfather regularly walked her to the library. Thelma's grandfather completed Grade 7 and worked in a factory for a number of years until he was retrenched. Thelma was able to read short paragraphs but needed assistance on a regular basis. The grandfather was unable to fulfill this role as a parent, leaving the learner void.

Ebrahim was a loner and he never had time to go the library because his single mother often had to go out and char for people. Since his mother left school at Grade 6 level, very little encouragement was forthcoming. The mother was

unable to assist her child at any given time leaving him on his own most of the time.

Rosaline was an average reader and she always tried her best. Her mother left school at Grade 8 and was unable to encourage her daughter to acquire an interest and love for literacy. She (Rosaline) was a keen netball player and she managed to gain a lot of friends while playing sport with other learners. It is also through her interaction with many of her friends that she learnt the art of being able to express herself confidently.

Michael battled to keep up to date with his reading. His mother, who left school at Grade 8 level, acquired a lot of books for him yet he very seldom read these books. He had other interests that kept him busy. His mother enjoyed reading a wide variety of books and magazines regularly yet was unable to instill in him the love for reading.

Alana had a very stormy past and clearly showed no interests in literacy yet her parent had the qualities to assist her with her literacy. There was no external motivation from the parents' side because the home conditions were not conducive for reading. She clearly displayed no interests in reading because little encouragement came from the parents. Her mother left school during Grade 9 making her fairly competent to assist her child. She was exposed to a lot of violence in the past and believed that it was right to be violent by nature. However, all of this affected the learner in different ways.

Claude was very quiet and did not want to participate in any discussion sessions. He came from a single parent home where very little support is given to him. He had very little interest in literacy because he is always on his own. He preferred playing with friends until it was very dark at night than to reading. His mother completed Grade 8 and enjoyed reading books occasionally but was unable to encourage him to read.

Fatima did not like to read books, yet she was very good at playing the trumpet. Her home was over crowded. She was able to converse with strangers with

ease but experienced problems when she had to read from her reader. She knew how to communicate with other people, a technique which she acquired whilst being with her friends regularly. Her mother left school in Grade 9 but battles to provide for the family. The mother indicated that she wants to assist her daughter but finds it difficult due to her having care for her five children, on her own.

We may conclude that the learners', other than Sandra and Monique, knowledge of the world were limited and accordingly their vocabulary were also limited.

The two contrasting situations, where conceptual knowledge has been broadened due to social interaction also developed a broad reservoir of words which assist in the ability to read and write. Conversely, the learners with limited social interaction and knowledge of worldly events also have a limited vocabulary and accordingly struggled with literacy tasks.

The preceding findings are supported by Freire and Macedo's argument that literacy, in particular reading, is ***'preceded by and intertwined with knowledge of the world'*** (1987: 29). Drawing on their own experiences of becoming literate, they argued that their knowledge of the social and physical environments, conveyed through stories, play and myth by and with their siblings and elders, became the building blocks for them to read the word (1987: 29-32).

Those learners, in the study, whose social and physical worlds were the largest, developed their conceptual understanding of the world which again reflected in their literacy abilities. Those with limited worldly experiences had a deficient vocabulary and accordingly low literacy abilities.

Cline and Necochea provide support that conceptual development precedes literacy learning. They argue, drawing on their personal experiences, that the foundation of their literacy competence is to be found in the oral traditions of

their families that was primarily conveyed through story telling (Cline and Necochea 2003: 123).

This study confirms the assertion that conceptual development precedes literacy learning in the sense that those learners whose conceptual development was limited struggled with the literacy tasks. Conversely, those learners whose conceptual worlds were enhanced through social interactions performed better in the literacy tasks. This finding is also consistent with Freire and Machado's (1987) argument that literacy is not just a technical set of skills but rather, literacy is an active process of meaning making that draws on knowledge and concepts that are already familiar to the reader and/or writer.

Following the initial interviewing process, a number of learners at School X joined either of two bands and became extremely successful in the skill of playing brass instruments. This resulted in the two bands being invited to functions in and around Kalksteefontein. These opportunities exposed members of the band, learners at School X, to people they would not normally interact with.



Even the slowest readers, were able to hold their own by playing the musical instruments that one would consider being difficult to play. It was amazing because suddenly everyone realised that these learners had potential that no one was aware of.

The interesting result of all of this was that the learners in the band started to excel in all their grades in school. This came about because the learners were given opportunities to move beyond their personal boundaries and were allowed to interact with learners in their age categories. They were able to exchange ideas and techniques which were common to them.

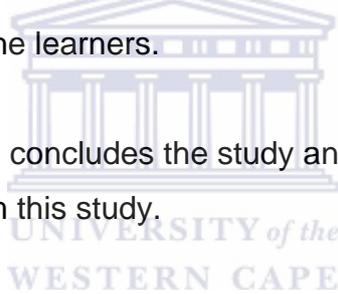
Again drawing on the experiences of learners who excelled at school due to their exposure to a broader world is another instance that supports Freire and Macedo's (1987) suggestion that there is a close relationship between a learners' exposure to the world and their literacy abilities.

4.5 CONCLUSION

This section examined the different factors that influence the literacy abilities of Grade 3 learners at Primary School X. The researcher limited the investigation to factors that are common within the environment where the learners grow up and the social factors that also play a pivotal role in the lives of these learners which in turn influence their literacy development.

Following a systematic analysis of the data, it was found that no definitive correlation between parental literacy competence and the literacy abilities of their children could be drawn. However, the study found that the nature and quality of interacting with divergent social and physical environments increased learners' conceptual worlds as well as their vocabulary which in turn improved the literacy abilities of the learners.

The section that follows concludes the study and identifies possible future research that flows from this study.



SECTION FIVE CONCLUSION

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This section concludes the study of the investigation into the relationship between parental literacy level and the literacy abilities of their Grade three children at Primary School X.

This section presents a summary of the key findings and identifies some of the most important lessons that might influence literacy acquisition of young children.

Tentative suggestions are made for possible further research which might contribute to the improving literacy learning at School X.

5.2 CONCLUSIONS FROM THE CASE STUDY

The purpose of this study was to investigate whether there exist a direct correlation between parental literacy levels and the literacy abilities of their children who were Grade 3 learners at School X.

Whilst parental literacy levels might influence learners' literacy abilities this case study found no significant correlation between parental literacy levels and their children's literacy abilities. This finding is consistent with that of Chall and Snow (1982) who found that 'no simple correlation between parents' literacy level, educational background, and the amount of time spent on literacy work with children and overall achievement existed.

The learner, in this study, that emphasises the finding that parental literacy competence does not significantly determine the literacy abilities of their children is Sandra whose guardian was functionally non-literate, and accordingly could not support and assist her in her literacy learning. Yet, she

gained the highest score in the literacy Test. This came about because of her being exposed to different social and physical environments that provided opportunities to meet with different people and interacting with them at regular intervals and varying levels.

The study found that the extent to which Grade 3 learners were exposed and familiar with the broader world, played a much more significant role in them acquiring literacy skills.

Following Freire and Machado (1987), it became clear in this study that the more opportunities learners had in developing and extending their vocabulary, the greater their literacy abilities. Both Sandra and Monique had different worldly experiences which assisted their conceptual development as well as increased their vocabulary. Conversely, Claude and Fatima had limited opportunities to interact socially and accordingly had a relatively limited vocabulary.

The literacy Test result reflected this relationship in that Sandra and Monique had the highest literacy abilities whilst Claude and Fatima had the weakest literacy abilities in the class.

Having said the above, whilst the researcher never had access to the standardised literacy Test, one needs to be mindful that the validity of such a Test could be questioned for a number of reasons. For example, were the cultural assumptions that underpinned the Test shared by the learners at School X; were the instructions clear and understood. These might not explain the different scores learners received at School X, but it can be explained for the stark differences in performances between learners at School X, School Y and School Z.

The validity of the Test, whilst being a significant factor in the results achieved by School X, was not the focus of this study and accordingly was not investigated.

It should be noted that this was only an introductory investigation into factors that influence literacy learning and accordingly should in no way be viewed as a conclusive study. Further research is necessary to ascertain how schools, parents and communities, in poverty stricken and disadvantaged communities could collaborate in giving young learners more exposure to the wider world in order to stimulate conceptual development.

Obviously, research is also necessary in examining the validity of the literacy Test, especially in the community under discussion.

5.3 FURTHER RESEARCH POSSIBILITIES

This study did not attempt to compare the literacy practices at School X, School Y and School Z. However, since the literacy test scores at these three schools differed so significantly, it would be valuable to do such a comparative study. In particular, the School X represented a depressingly impoverished school community whilst School Z represented a relatively affluent school community. An issue such research could pursue is to compare strategies and resources children and their parents draw on in nurturing the literacy abilities of the children.

5.4 CONCLUSION

This section summarised the key findings of the study and made recommendations for further research.

SECTION SIX

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APPENDIX A COVERING LETTER TO PARENTS

July 2006

Dear Participant/Parent

I, JEFFREY PHILLIP ARENDSE, student number 8214339, am a University of the Western Cape student currently registered as a Master of Education Student within the faculty of Education.

As part of my research work towards gaining this Masters degree in Adult Learning and Global change, I am conducting a study into the relationship between parent literacy levels and grade-three learners' literacy abilities. The title of my mini-thesis is: Explaining the relationship between parental literacy and grade 3 learners' literacy abilities at a primary school.

In order for me to complete this study, I seek your assistance and permission to interview you and your child since your child has been randomly selected to be a respondent within this study.

Even though this study, in the first instance, is part of a formal qualification, I will use the findings of the investigation to improve literacy practices of pupils at primary school.

I want to assure you that your contribution in this study will be treated in the strictest confidentiality and no personal information will be made known to any third party. You and your child will remain anonymous throughout and beyond this study and the information you provide will only be used for the purposes of this investigation.

However, if you prefer not to participate in this study I will respect your decision. You should not feel obligated to participate in this study.

If you agree to partake in this study, I will interview both you and your child. The interview with you will take approximately 30 minutes and the interview with your child approximately 20 minutes. I will conduct the interview with your child at school since the school is relatively accessible to me. The interview with you, I propose is conducted at your place of residence; alternately, you may suggest a different venue for this interview.

Thanking you.

.....
JEFFREY ARENDSE
RESEARCHER

.....
Mr NATHEEM HENDRICKS
SUPERVISOR

APPENDIX B QUESTIONNAIRE: PARENTS

1. Who helps your child with his/her homework everyday?

.....

2. You as parent, how much time do you spend with your child while he/she does the homework?

.....
.....

3. Do you have a lot of resources which your child can use while doing his/her homework?

.....
.....

4. If your child needs to go to the library who accompanies your child?

.....

5. Do you have a lot of readers /reading books that your child can access?

.....
.....

6. What types of books are available for your child?

.....
.....

7. Do you have a fixed time every day where the family comes together to read?

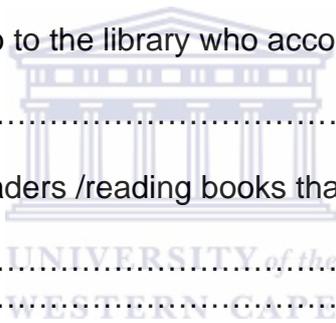
.....

8. Who usually reads stories to your child at home?

.....

9. When your child does her/his homework, are there sections that you do not understand?

.....
.....



10. If you do experience such problems what do you do about it?

.....
.....

11. At what school grade did you leave school?

.....

12. Do you have plans in wanting to study again?

.....
.....

13. Do you know anything about ABET?

.....

14. If it becomes available would you like to join it?

.....

15. Are you in full time employment at the moment?

.....



APPENDIX C INTERVIEW WITH LEARNERS

With this questionnaire I need to determine the nature of the literacy practices of pupils:

1. Do you know where your parents lived before they came to Kalksteenfontein?

.....
.....

2. Within your extended family have you heard of any events that took place before you were born? How did you come to hear about these issues?

.....
.....

3. Did you hear about any events/issues that took place within Kalksteenfontein or Bonteheuwel?

.....

4. Did you hear of any major events that took place within the broader Cape Town?

.....

5. Can you recall any major events that you heard about within South Africa?

.....

6. Did anyone share stories with you about events that took place around the World?

.....

7. Have you heard about any events that took place at your schoolsome time ago?

.....
.....

8. Did you read about these events? Did your parents talk about it? Did your friends or teachers talk about it? Did you hear about it from other family members?



.....
.....
.....

9. How often do you watch programmes on television? Can you name two of your most favourite programmes you watch? Why do you prefer these programmes?

.....
.....

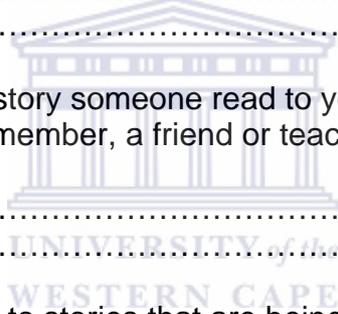
10. How often do you listen to the radio? What type of stories do you listen to? Are these programmes in English, Afrikaans or Xhosa.

.....
.....

11. How often do you read newspapers, comics, leaflets and books?

.....
.....

12. Have you listened to a story someone read to you? Was it your parents, brother/sister, a family member, a friend or teacher?



.....
.....

13. How often do you listen to stories that are being read by someone?

.....

14. Do you enjoy listening to stories someone reads to you?

.....

15. Have you read or told a story to your siblings (sisters or brothers) or friends before?

.....

16. Do you participate in any sports or do you have any hobbies?

.....

17. If you participate in sports, who introduced you to it?

.....

18. How are your parents involved in your sports/hobbies?

.....
.....



APPENDIX D:

GRADE 3 ASSESSMENT SCHOOL X

Navrae
Enquiries
Imibuzo
Telefoon
Telephone
Ifoni
Faks
Fax
Ifeksi
Verwysing
Reference
Isalathiso

Dr RS Cornelissen
(021) 467-2286
(021) 425-7445
20050526-0078

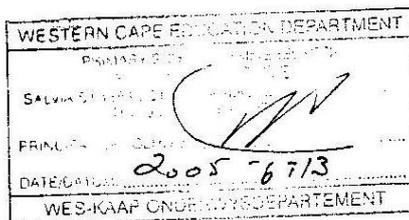


Wes-Kaap Onderwysdepartement
Western Cape Education Department
ISEbe leMfundo leNtshona Koloni

SCHOOL X

7490

Geagte Heer/Dame



Graad 3-assessering vir 2004

Die Wes-Kaap Onderwysdepartement (WKOD) het opdrag gegee dat navorsing aangaande die vlakke van geletterdheid en syfervaardigheid van graad 3-leerders in 2004 in die provinsie onderneem word. Dit is 'n voortsetting van die navorsing wat in 2002 onderneem is om die WKOD met sy beplanning vir monitoring en ondersteuning van skole te help.

Die WKOD het die *Schools Development Unit* van die Universiteit van Kaapstad aangestel om die geletterdheids- en syfervaardigheidstoets vir graad 3-leerders in alle skole van die WKOD met meer as 4 graad 3-leerders, in Oktober en November 2004 af te neem. Die uitslae van die assesseringsverslag is van die navorsers ontvang en die resultate word in vyf aangehegte tabelle uiteengesit.

Die uitslae vir *Geletterdheid* dui aan dat 2.5% van die graad 3-leerders wat in 2004 getoets is, op die graad 3-vlak vir syfervaardigheid was en dat 10.0% van die graad 3-leerders op die graad 3-vlak vir geletterdheid was. Ten einde die slaagpersentasie te bepaal, is die Hersiende Nasionale Kurrikulumverklaring (HNKV) se Assesseringstandaarde gebruik en 50% is beskou as die bereikbare standaard vir leerders.

Assessering	2002	2004	Verskil	Resultate
Syfervaardigheidsresultate	8.0%	2.5%	-5.5%	Afname
Geletterdheidsresultate	0.0%	10.0%	10.0%	Verbetering

Wanneer die resultate vir 2002 en 2004 (as u skool beide jare getoets is) vergelyk word, is die verskil in geletterdheid en syfervaardigheid 'n aanduiding hoe die skool gevorder/agteruitgegaan het. Indien die uitslae vir geletterdheid en/of syfervaardigheid swak is, moet spesiale aandag aan daardie swakheid/swakhede in u skool gegee word.

Die resultate in tabelle 1 tot 5 is gebaseer op hierdie bereikbare standaard. Let daarop dat die assesseringstoets vrae op graad 1- tot graad 4-vlak vir syfervaardigheid en graad 1- tot graad 3-vlak vir geletterdheid ingesluit het. Die vrae is ontwikkel om te assesseer wat leerders weet en kan doen. Daarom rapporteer tabelle 1 tot 5 uitslae op hierdie graadvlakke.

MELD ASSEBLIEF VERWYSINGSNUMMERS IN ALLE KORRESPONDENSIE / PLEASE QUOTE REFERENCE NUMBERS IN ALL CORRESPONDENCE /
NCEDA UBEALE IINOMBOLO ZESALATHISO KUYO YONKE DIBALELWANO

GRAND CENTRAL TOWERS, LAER-PARLEMENTSTRAAT, PRIVAATSAK N9114, KAAPSTAD 8000
GRAND CENTRAL TOWERS, LOWER PARLIAMENT STREET, PRIVATE BAG N9114, CAPE TOWN 8000

WEB: <http://wced.wcape.gov.za>

INBELSENTRUM / CALL CENTRE

INDIENSNEMING- EN SALARISNAVRAE/EMPLOYMENT AND SALARY QUERIES ☎0861 92 33 22

2004 Graad 3-assesseringsresultate

NOMMER: 0102480460

SKOLNAAM: ... SCHOOL X

vaardighedsuitslae

1: Persentasie leerders wat die graadvlak vir syfervaardigheid bereik het		Graad 1-vaardig	Graad 2-vaardig	Graad 3-vaardig	Graad 4 Vaardig
Syfervaardigheid		Onder Graad 1			
1	: KALKSTEENFONTEIN PRIM.	42.5%	57.5%	5.0%	2.5%
2		17.4%	82.6%	58.4%	15.6%
3		16.1%	83.9%	57.8%	17.2%
	S: Metropool Noord	20.3%	79.7%	50.0%	14.1%

2: Persentasie leerders wat syfervaardigheidstake per graadvlak geslaag het

Taak	Graad 1		Graad 2		Graad 3		Graad 4	
1	75.0%	22.5%	12.5%	5.0%	10.0%	0.0%	2.5%	
2	62.5%	17.5%	10.0%	0.0%	7.5%	2.5%		
3	72.5%	2.5%	0.0%		0.0%			
4		2.5%	27.5%					
5		37.5%						

3: Persentasie leerders wat kennis en vaardigheid per graadvlak in syfervaardigheid bereik het

Kennis of vaardigheid	Graad 1		Graad 2		Graad 3		Graad 4	
1	72.5%	37.5%	27.5%	60.0%	0.0%	2.5%		
2		2.5%	0.0%		10.0%	2.5%		
3	75.0%	25.0%	10.0%					

4: Geletterheidsuitslae

1: Persentasie leerders wat die graadvlak vir geletterdheid bereik het		Graad 1-vaardig	Graad 2-vaardig	Graad 3-vaardig
Geletterdheid		Onder Graad 1		
1	: KALKSTEENFONTEIN PRIM.	5.0%	45.0%	10.0%
2		4.9%	72.6%	42.2%
3		5.5%	75.4%	48.0%
4	SOS: Metropool Noord	6.2%	69.2%	39.5%

Tabelle 1 en 4 gee 'n algemene oorsig oor die syfervaardigheids- en geletterheidsuitslae by u skool met vergelykende persentasies vir die kring, OBOS-distrik en provinsie. Tabelle 1 en 4 toon ook die persentasie leerders by u skool wat onder graad 1, of op graad 1-, 2-, en 3-vlakke presteer en toon dat die leeruitkomst wat van graad 3-leerders verwag word (soos gebaseer op die NHKV) nie behaal is nie. Daar kan uit hierdie resultate afgelei word dat geletterheids- en syfervaardigheidstandaarde van u leerders veel laer is as die verwagte minimum standaarde vir geletterdheid en syfervaardigheid. Daar word dus 'n beroep op u en die opvoeders verbonde aan u skool gedoen dat die uitslae van u skool moet verbeter.

Tabelle 2, 3, en 5 is gebaseer op die kategorisering van elke vraag in die geletterheids- en syfervaardigheidstoetse, ten opsigte van take, kennis en vaardighede. Hierdie tabelle toon die slaagpersentasie per graad vir elke leertaak, kennis en vaardighede in geletterdheid en syfervaardigheid.

Die WKOD het ook 'n Geletterheids-en syfervaardigheidskomitee gestig om skole te ondersteun. Die WKOD versoek u en u opvoeders om met u OBOS saam te werk ten einde 'n intervensieplan te stel om te verseker dat die geletterheids- en syfervaardigheidsvlakke van die leerders verbeter word. Ten einde die beplanning te vergemaklik, is elke OBOS voorsien van al die graad 3-assesseringsresultate van al die betrokke skole in die OBOS.

Vestig asseblief die aandag van u opvoeders op hierdie resultate.

Let wel dat die toetse is nie beskikbaar gestel word nie, omdat hulle as die basis vir verdere toetsontwikkeling sal dien.

Die uwe



HOOF: ONDERWYS
DATUM: 07 Junie 2005



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APPENDIX E

Naam
Enquiries Dr RS Cornelissen
Imibuzo
Telefoon
Telephone (021) 467-2286
Iboni
Faks
Fax (021) 425-7445
Ikhazi
Verwysing
Reference 20080520-0078
Iselathiso



Wes-Kaap Onderwysdepartement

Western Cape Education Department

IsiXhosa leMfundo leNtshona Koloni

The Principal

02120

SCHOOL Y

7780

Dear Sir/Madam

Grade 3 Assessment in 2004

The Western Cape Education Department (WCED) commissioned research into the literacy and numeracy levels of Grade 3 learners in the province in 2004. This continues the research initiated in 2002, which was undertaken to assist the WCED in planning its monitoring and support of schools.

The WCED appointed the Schools Development Unit at the University of Cape Town to administer literacy and numeracy tests in October and November 2004 to Grade 3 learners in all WCED schools with more than 4 Grade 3 learners. The researchers' report on the assessment exercise has been received and the results of your school are set out in the five attached tables.

The results for the PRIM indicate that 41.9% of your Grade 3 learners tested in 2004 were at the Grade 3 level for numeracy and 29.0% of your learners were at the Grade 3 level for literacy. To determine the pass percentage, the Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS) assessment standards were used and 50% was considered as the attainment standard for learners.

Assessment	2002	2004	Difference	Results
Numeracy Results	23.0%	41.9%	18.9%	Significant Improvement
Literacy Results	5.0%	29.0%	24.0%	Significant Improvement

When comparing the 2002 and 2004 results (if your school was tested in both years), the differences in the numeracy and literacy results gives an indication of how your school has progressed/declined. If literacy and/or numeracy results are weak, special attention must now be given to that weakness/these weaknesses in your school.

The results in Tables 1 to 5 were based on the attainment standard. Please note that the assessment test included Grade 1 to Grade 4-level questions for numeracy and Grade 1 to Grade 3-level questions for literacy and was developed to assess what learners know and can do. Tables 1 to 5, therefore, report results at these grade levels.

Tables 1 and 4 provide an overall view of the numeracy and literacy results for your school, with comparable percentages for the circuit, the EMDC and the province. Tables 1 and 4 also shows the percentage of learners at your school achieving below Grade 1, or at Grade 1, 2 and 3 levels and indicate

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22 AND CENTRAL TOWERS, LOWER PARLIAMENT STREET, PRIVATE BAG 90114, CAPE TOWN 8000

WEB <http://www.wced.gov.za>
INBENKENTRUM/A ALL CENTRE

2004 Grade 3 Assessment Results

EMIS NUMBER: 0
SCHOOL NAME: SCHOOL Y

Numeracy Results

Table 1: Percentage of learners achieving at grade level for numeracy

Numeracy	Below Grade 1	Grade 1 Proficiency	Grade 2 Proficiency	Grade 3 Proficiency	Grade 4 Proficiency
School: BET THORN PRIM	12.8%	87.1%	48.4%	41.8%	6.5%
Grade: 5	11.6%	88.4%	64.2%	53.4%	22.0%
EMDC: Metropole Central	11.3%	88.7%	65.3%	53.5%	21.3%
Province: Western Cape	20.3%	79.7%	50.0%	37.3%	14.1%

Table 2: Percentage of learners passing numeracy tasks per grade level.

Task	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4
Addition	90.8%	51.6%	51.6%	19.4%
Subtraction	66.8%	51.6%	48.4%	6.5%
Repeated addition and multiplication	74.2%	29.0%	35.5%	8.7%
Division of fractions		39.7%	19.4%	
Ordering		67.7%	58.1%	

Table 3: Percentage of learners passing knowledge and skill numeracy items per grade level

Knowledge/Skill	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4
Counting, ordering and representing numbers	87.1%	71.6%	61.3%	10.6%
Solving problems		32.3%	19.4%	0.0%
Calculations	90.3%	61.3%	41.9%	6.5%

Literacy Results

Table 4: Percentage of learners achieving at grade level for literacy

Literacy	Below Grade 1	Grade 1 Proficiency	Grade 2 Proficiency	Grade 3 Proficiency
School: BET THORN PRIM	6.5%	93.5%	67.7%	29.0%
Grade: 5	2.3%	97.7%	71.9%	48.9%
EMDC: Metropole Central	4.1%	95.9%	79.4%	52.7%
Province: Western Cape	6.7%	93.3%	63.2%	39.5%

Tables 2, 3, and 5 are based on the categorisation of each question in the numeracy and literacy test, in terms of task, knowledge and skill. These tables report the percentage passes per grade at your school for each task, as well as knowledge and skill, in numeracy and literacy.

It is important to share these results with your educators.

Please note that the tests will not be made available, as they will form the basis for future test development.

Yours sincerely,



HEAD: EDUCATION
DATE: 07 June 2005



UNIVERSITY *of the*
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Enquiries: Dr RS Cornelissen
 Telephone: (021) 467-4286
 Facsimile: (021) 425-7448
 Reference: 20050526-0078



Wes-Kaap Onderwysdepartement
 Western Cape Education Department
 ISebe leMfundo leNtshona Koloni

The Principal
 SCHOOL Z
 7441

Dear Sir/Madam

Grade 3 Assessment in 2004

The Western Cape Education Department (WCED) commissioned research into the literacy and numeracy levels of Grade 3 learners in the province in 2004. This continues the research initiated in 2002, which was undertaken to assist the WCED in planning its monitoring and support of schools.

The Schools Development Unit at the University of Cape Town was appointed to administer literacy and numeracy tests in October and November 2004 to Grade 3 learners in all WCED schools with more than 4 Grade 3 learners. The researchers' report on the assessment exercise has been received and the results of your school are set out in the five attached tables.

The results for your school indicate that 90.0% of your Grade 3 learners tested in 2004 were at the Grade 3 level for numeracy and 90.0% of your learners were at the Grade 3 level for literacy. The Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS) assessment standards were used and 50% was considered as the attainment standard for learners.

Assessment	2002	2004	Difference	Results
Numeracy Results	88.0%	90.0%	2.0%	Minor Improvement
Literacy Results	83.0%	90.0%	7.0%	Improvement

When comparing the 2002 and 2004 results (if your school was tested in both years), the differences in the numeracy and literacy results gives an indication of how your school has progressed/declined.

The results in Tables 1 to 5 are based on the attainment standard. Please note that the assessment test included Grade 1 to Grade 4-level questions for numeracy and Grade 1 to Grade 3-level questions for literacy and was developed to assess what learners know and can do. Tables 1 to 5, therefore, report results at these grade levels.

Tables 1 and 4 provide an overall view of the numeracy and literacy results for your school, with comparable percentages for the circuit, the EMDC and the province. Tables 1 and 4 also show the percentage learners at your school achieving below Grade 1, or at Grade 1, 2 and 3 levels. From the results it can be deduced that the literacy and numeracy standards at your school are those that can be expected of Grade 3 learners. We would like to congratulate you on these results.

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INBELSENTRUM / CALL CENTRE

2004 Grade 3 Assessment Results

EMIS NUMBER: 0102309238

SCHOOL NAME: SCHOOL Z

Numeracy Results

Table 1: Percentage of learners achieving at grade level for numeracy

Numeracy	Below Grade 1	Grade 1 Proficiency	Grade 2 Proficiency	Grade 3 Proficiency	Grade 4 Proficiency
SCHOOL: EDGEMOOR PRIM	0.0%	100.0%	96.0%	90.0%	85.0%
Grade 3	17.4%	82.6%	58.4%	44.8%	35.6%
EMIS: Metropolitan Province, Western Cape	16.1%	83.9%	57.8%	45.0%	37.2%
	20.5%	79.7%	51.0%	37.3%	14.1%

Table 2: Percentage of learners passing numeracy tasks per grade level

Task	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4
Addition	100.0%	97.5%	92.5%	72.5%
Subtraction	97.5%	90.0%	82.5%	40.0%
Repeated addition and multiplication	97.5%	62.0%	95.0%	65.0%
Division of fractions		72.5%	62.5%	
Ordering		85.0%	75.0%	

Table 3: Percentage of learners passing knowledge and skill numeracy items per grade level

Knowledge/Skill	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4
Counting, ordering and representing numbers	97.5%	97.5%	97.5%	92.5%
Solving problems		87.5%	67.5%	12.5%
Calculations	100.0%	97.5%	92.5%	55.0%

Literacy Results

Table 4: Percentage of learners achieving at grade level for literacy

Literacy	Below Grade 1	Grade 1 Proficiency	Grade 2 Proficiency	Grade 3 Proficiency
SCHOOL: EDGEMOOR PRIM	0.0%	100.0%	100.0%	90.0%
Grade 3	4.5%	85.1%	72.8%	42.2%
EMIS: Metropolitan Province, Western Cape	3.5%	84.5%	75.4%	48.0%
	6.2%	83.8%	68.2%	39.5%

Tables 2, 3, and 5 are based on the categorisation of each question in the numeracy and literacy test, in terms of task, knowledge and skill. These tables report the percentage passes per grade at your school for each task, as well as knowledge and skill, in numeracy and literacy.

It is important to share these results with your educators.

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Yours sincerely,



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