

The Family Literacy Practices of Ten Adult Participants at the Tembaletu Adult Basic Education Centre in rural KwaZulu-Natal: A Case Study

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the family literacy practices of ten adult participants who attend the Tembaletu Adult Basic Education (ABE) Centre in rural KwaZulu-Natal. The aim was to explore the influence of the ABE programme on these practices? The concept of family literacy in this rural context was interrogated. This is a qualitative case study, and the data collection techniques included individual interview, focus group interviews, observation, and document analysis. Findings revealed that women engaged in varied literacy practices in their homes. Story telling was more common than reading to children. The participants in the study for the first time are able to engage with their children in school related literacy activities. The extent to which the participants and their children supported each other in their literacy development was dependent on the levels of literacy. The Adult Basic Education programme had a direct impact on the literacy practices in the families of the participants. The benefits reported by the participants included personal empowerment, enhanced self-image, and the acquisition of literacy life skills that are crucial to the health and well being of their families. The study highlights tensions between the content of adult programmes and family literacy practices valued by the participants. Other key issues that emerged in the study are: the link between family literacy and culture; gender and family literacy; family literacy in the context of HIV/Aids. The findings in this study valuable perspectives on emerging family literacy in a rural context – an area of study that is in its infancy in South Africa.

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the work presented in this dissertation is my own, and that reference to the work by any other persons has been duly acknowledged. This dissertation is my original work, which has never been submitted for any other degree or examination in any other university.

Themba Sokhulu

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CHAPTER 1: BACK GROUND TO THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

1.1 Introduction

Alexandra and Clyne (1995) postulate that families as context for learning are vehicles for the transmission of education in the society. Education starts from the family in the sense that the family interaction is intimate and intense and includes ongoing activities that can support literacy more than any other type of institution. Like Alexandra and Clyne (1995) I think that a good environment and space for children to learn can be created through the trust and intimacy that usually exists between the child and parent or care-giver. Children also feel safer to make mistakes in front of a parent rather than in the class and in presence of the teacher. There is not much done by South African ministry of education to promote family literacy despite the fact that the importance of mothers and home background for educational achievement is widely recognized.

This research focused on the practices of family literacy. It investigated the influence of the Tembaletu Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET) programme on family literacy practices as reported by the women interviewed for this study. Of the ten women who were interviewed for this study, three of them had never been to school, one left school as a child in grade naught, one left in grade one, six in grade seven and the other in grade nine. This study will contribute to the very small body of knowledge pertaining to family literacy in the South African context in particular in the province of KwaZulu-Natal.

The purpose of this research was to explore literacy practices in the families of the women participating in the Tembaletu ABET class. The aim of the research was to establish how literacy skills are used in the homes of the women, their attitude to family literacy as well as the attitude they have about their own learning. It also looked at their use of media such as television and radio.

This chapter focuses on motivation for this study, the main research questions, and provides a background to the kwaQanda Literacy Project.

1.2 Motivation for this study

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

1.3 Main research questions

The ABET programme at KwaQanda started in 1999 at eNhlangueni Primary School. There were seventeen middle-aged women who enrolled as participants in the programme. The following were the critical questions:

- What are the literacy practices of the participants selected in the families of ten women participating in an ABET class in the rural context?
- What influence did the ABE programme have on these practices?
- What concept of family literacy is emerging in this rural context?

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter will examine perspectives on family literacy practices in America and South Africa, especially practices that involve children. I am focusing on the American model because most of the literature available on family literacy originates in the United States. It is rather worth noting at this point that there is limited literature on family literacy in South Africa, therefore most of my literature review is based on work of the United States scholars. The second part of this section will extract themes and issues that are reflected in the research.

2.2 Definition of family literacy

Family literacy is defined as a set of practices which encompass the ways parents, children and extended family members use literacy at home and in their community. Morrow (1995 p.7/8) goes on to mention that these practices sometimes take effect in a natural way such as in the course of doing household chores. Literacy practices includes using drawing or writing to share ideas, composing notes or letters to communicate messages, sharing stories and ideas through conversation and reading activity.

- ✓ Initiatives to promote family literacy cited in Benjamin and Lord (1996) include interactive literacy activities between mothers and their children, equipping mothers with skills on how to be their children's primary teacher and to be full partners in the education of their children, parent literacy training and early childhood education. These components provide three core services to family literacy, namely, parenting education, adult basic education and early childhood education.

2.3 Perspectives on family literacy

The concept of family literacy was written of as early as in 1908 when Huey wrote of children learning in schools. Family literacy became a buzzword and gained momentum between 1985 and 1995 in the United States of America. Morrow (1995) maintains that mothers or care-givers are the primary teachers of their children. Children spend all their pre-school years in the company of their mother and care-givers. Even once they have started school, the influence of mothers and care-givers is much stronger than that from the school environment. The concept of educational programmes that are meant to develop strategies to enhance family literacy in Britain and United States of America is viewed as an important part of educational strategies developed to help children whose mothers have low or no education at all, or immigrant families where English is the second or third language. Family literacy has received much attention to the extent that the governments and charitable trusts in both countries fund the work of parent's education programmes that enhance family literacy. Auerbach (1995) says that family literacy in the United States of America has been seen as a solution to problems of schooling and a number of charitable trusts have been formed, for example The Barbra Bush Family Literacy Foundation, the Keenan Family Trust and the Coors Family Literacy Foundation.

Like Benjamin and Lord (1996), Morrow (1995) argues that the teacher will not be able to educate on his or her own and that the involvement of mothers and care-givers is of importance. Mothers are partners with teachers in the education of their children. Parenting education is viewed by Morrow (1995) as an integral component of most family involvement. This means that one cannot ignore the need for adult participants to enhance their own literacies whilst providing an environment which enhances the literacies of their own children. The fundamental assumption in the idea of supporting the educational programmes that enhance parent's literacy is that increased knowledge will result in positive changes in mothers attitudes toward literacy and literacy-related behaviour with their children, and that those changes, in turn, will improve literacy-related outcomes for children (Pierre and Layzer:p.82 in Benjamin and Lord, 1996).

Extensive research shows that there are literacy practices that relate directly to children's performance at school. Clark, Cochran-Smith, Morrow, and Teale (Morrow, 1995) suggests that there is a strong link between literacy practices in the home environment and children's acquisition of school-based literacy. These practices include shared reading, reading aloud, making print materials available, and promoting positive attitudes toward literacy in the home. Another very important practice is exposure to radio and television programmes that promote learning. These include television programmes like *Takalani Sesame*, *Bunny*, and *Teletubbies*. Other activities that influence the children's learning are trips to the zoo, aquarium, reading comics and having their faces painted in the shopping mall, and travel to other cities, provinces or internationally.

Other research conducted by Auerbach (1989) Heath (1983) Taylor and Dorsy-Gaines (1988) suggests that some types and forms of literacy practiced in some homes is largely different from that that the children encounter at school, but there is an indirect link between some practices and children's school performance even in families where little or weak family literacy practices. Auerbach (1989) suggests that there is evidence that in some poverty stricken and low income families there is rich cultivation and context of oral literacy development which supports family literacy. These will include activities such as story telling which is used as a strong part of the cultural environment. This suggests that there is a great deal of research that needs to be done with the people who are not exposed to or who can not afford print or other educational material. Parents need to be encouraged to tell stories to their children because children learn from the family members or care-givers before they are influenced by other materials such as print and audiovisual media.

Cultural practices can enrich practices of family literacy. Morrow (1995) suggests a very important and interesting point that family literacy must be studied from a broad perspective by respecting cultures in which no books exist but where story telling is a strong part of the cultural environment, as well as documenting cultures within which print material is a dominant medium. Morrow's point is generally true in the African

context. The African continent is generally perceived by the west as a continent that is rich with the culture of oral tradition perhaps because of the large challenge of illiteracy that exists in the African continent.

Some of the American family literacy enhancing programmes outlined by Morrow (1995) included activities such as giving mothers or other care-givers specific guidelines, materials and training to carry out school-like activities in the home. Mothers were taken through programmes, which focused on topics such as:

- Teaching mothers about United States of America educational system and philosophy of schooling,
- Providing mothers with concrete methods and materials to use at home with children,
- Training mothers in how to read to children or listen to children read,
- Assisting mothers to promote good reading habits,
- Working with mothers on the development of their own basic literacy skills,
- Giving mothers a calendar or recipe book of ideas for shared literacy activities,
- Teaching mothers how to communicate with school authorities, and
- Teaching mothers to make and play games to re-enforce skills.

2.4 Practices of literacy and children's reading development

There are several aspects of parent-child interactions associated with children's later literacy success. Mikulecky (in Benjamin and Lord, 1996) provides a list of these interactions:

- parental reading to and with children,
- complexity of language and strategy for developing and refining language skills used between parents and children,
- parental conceptions of the roles of education and literacy, and
- literacy modelling and support present in the home environment.

The correlation between parental reading to and with children and children's later success is very strong (Chomsky 1972, Laosa, 1982, Anderson et al, 1985, Teale and Sulzby, 1986). Lancy and Bergin (1992) assert that in the United States of America children who are more fluent and positive about reading came from parent-child pairs who viewed reading as fun, kept stories moving with a "semantic" rather than "decoding" orientation, and encourage question and humour while reading. In other words this means they concentrate on underlying or hidden meaning rather than the simple surface meaning. The middle income mothers were also involved in more joint book reading than low income families. These mothers also deal a lot more with printed materials with their children thus the culture of independent reading is inculcated in their children. Fernandez-Fein and Scher (1994 in Benjamin and Lord, 1996) assert that in the United States of America the low-income mothers often spend more time on reading practice and homework such as letter practice with their kindergarten age children than the middle class mothers. However these activities tend to be superficial, focussing only on surface meaning rather than richer, underlying meaning implications and humour.

The research conducted by Snow & Goldfield (1983), Snow, Barnes, Chandler, Goodman & Hemphil (1991), Beals (1992) indicate that the role of family language (such as English, sign language, etc.) used by mothers and children during reading and in other family activities such as dinner-time conversations and explanatory talk plays an important part in children's school performance. The talk during mealtimes and to some extent during reading plays a greater role in predicting children's later reading achievement in school and on tests than does simply reading for children.

Lancy, Draper and Boyce (1989) report that mothers of good readers use expansionist strategies which include graduated support or scaffolding as children attempt to understand stories, as well as strategies for avoiding frustration by children. The scaffolding or graduated support is done when a parent reads a book to a child and does most of the talking by modelling the making of predictions. This is done by, for example, when the reading is about *my body*. The parent will read and point to the words next to the picture: *eyebrow, mouth, chin, ear*, etc. He or she will try to speak

less as the reading progresses over time to give the child a chance to take a more proactive role in reading or telling a story. This can be done when a parent points to the same words, *eyebrow*, and asks the child “what do you see in this picture (pointing at the eyebrow)?” The child will say “eyebrow!” The parent will say “great, the thick black eyebrow.” The conversation carries on in that fashion with the other vocabulary. This kind of reading and interaction can only happen with books that are read multiple times to the children. If the child experiences problems the parent assists. This method of reading is called scaffolding or graduated support because you build on what the child is saying affirming the child’s attempts and providing more description.

According to Lancy, Draper and Boyce (1989), mothers of poor readers use reductionist strategies, which reduce reading to decoding its simplest form and focuses on criticism, and sometimes even cover pictures to avoid a child’s “cheating” in figuring out a word. This method focuses on reading as a serious job which the child must work to master, rather than unthreatening, pleasurable activity.

Research has revealed that literacy behaviour is influenced by how mothers who value education conceive of literacy. The study convened by Goldenberg, Rees and Gallimore (1992, in Benjamin and Lord, 1996), report that low –income Hispanic mothers mainly emphasise letter naming and spelling-sound correspondence when trying to help their children. Baker et al. (1995) draws our attention to the fact that when low-income mothers spend time with their children, they are much more likely to emphasise explicit instruction as well as the work and practice aspects of literacy. On the other hand middle-income mothers tend to use stories for entertainment, playing, and extend conversation starters. The authors assert that literacy is presented and modelled as an enjoyable way to entertain one’s self and to understand the world.

The research findings of Baker, Serpell, and Sonnenshein (1995) indicate that parent-children literacy relationships are a two way process. The authors use the term *bi-directional*. The term bi-directional is used in a sense that children influence mothers and are influenced by them. On the other hand a child who finds literacy learning a painful experience is likely to avoid books and to make the reading experience painful

for the parent or care-giver involved. A child who enjoys reading and views it as an entertainment is likely to ask for books and seek attention while reading. Children of this nature end up reading independently.

On the question of literacy support in the home environment, Anderson, Hiebert, Scott and Wilkinson (1985) note that there is more reading materials such as books, magazines and educational literacy in the homes of higher income families and the families of children who performed well in school than in the homes of lower income families. Benjamin and Lord (1996) report that in studies where researchers expanded the definition of literacy materials to include more functional materials such as notes, bills, grocery lists and so forth, the differences between groups are reported to shrink (Delgado-Gaitan, 1987; and Taylor & Dorsey-Gains, 1988 in Benjamin and Lord, 1996). Heath 1983 observed that low income families used literacy but in a different fashion and for different purposes than the middle income families. Heath asserts that the schools, rather than families, need to change to accommodate the differences mentioned above instead of focusing upon middle class literacy use.

In line with the findings above, Purcell-Gates (1994) reports a low level of print use in low-income homes. The greatest proportion of print is not used for daily routines, employing simple language at the clause and phrase level. Purcell-Gates (1994) observed that low-income mothers engage in less books and magazine reading, and tend to take their children to libraries less than do higher-income parents (Fitzgerald, Spiegel, & Cunningham, 1991; Baker, Serpell, and Sonnenschein, 1995). On the other hand, low income mothers are reported to sometimes make extended use of such literacy-related behaviours as story telling and singing, as well as making sacrifices to financial and physically support children's education (Heath, 1983, Taylor & Dorsey-Gaines, 1988, Baker et al., 1995; Gadsen, 1994). Debate revolves around the meaning of these differences in literacy support and the degree to which schools focus only on the sort of literacy found in middle-class homes.

Edwards (1995) investigated the desire of low-income mothers in the USA to learn more about what to do when reading to their children. The comments made by

mothers in the interview indicated a degree of anxiety and willingness to help but they were incapable. Typical comments from the investigations include: *I don't know what to do when I open the book. I mean I don't know what to do first, second, third, and so on.* Another parent said: *I wish somebody would tell me what to do because I am fed up with teachers saying: "Read to your child."*

Research carried out in the USA to teach mothers strategies to help their children with reading has been largely successful to the extent that mothers have learned the strategies (Topping, 1986 in Benjamin and Lord 1996). This has helped some mothers to delay their reaction time to correct children's reading errors during the reading session. Some mothers have learned to offer more praise or to use more prompts as opposed to only word-level prompts. Benjamin and Lord (1996) observe that the other mothers have learned to read story books to children using dramatic conventions. The authors indicate there is evidence of transfer of learning to home practice.

There were many family literacy practices, which were borne as a result of comprehensive family literacy enriching programmes in United States in the late 1980s. Benjamin and Lord (1996) maintain that the programmes made their appearance during the late 1980s and early 1990s. The programmes include adult literacy education, and time for parents and children to be together. These programmes include multi-city efforts such as the national Even Start programs funded by the federal government of the United States and the Kenan model programmes were supported by the National Centre for family literacy and other state departments.

The differences in reading behaviours and strategy use demonstrate the differences in conceptions of education and literacy by mothers of the middle and low-income class. Mikulecky 1995 (in Benjamin and Lord 1999) when discussing parental conceptions of education and literacy notes that it is not true that low-income mothers do not value education. He draws attention to the fact that several researchers have reported that many low-income families value education very highly. Delgado-Gaitan (1988) says that obtaining a better education for children is a major reason given for Hispanic

immigration to the United States. Studies by Taylor and Dorsey-Gaines (1988) reveal that low-income families whose children succeed in school, report extraordinary sacrifices and efforts being made to support children's education, even when parental education levels are low. Fitzgerald, Spiegel and Cunningham (1991), in a study of low and high-income mothers, advance the idea that low-income mothers rated the value of education higher than did high-income mothers.

2.5 Practices of literacy in South Africa

Statistics South Africa reports that in:

- KwaZulu-Natal 1.1 million people from age 21 and above have had no schooling,
- 4.5 million in South Africa have had no schooling,
- Over 800 000 people had some schooling, and 287 070 people have completed only primary education in KwaZulu-Natal.

(Statistics South Africa: www.statssa.gov.za , accessed 1 December 2004).

The information yielded by the statistics suggests that there is little hope that much family literacy will be practiced in the homes of these under educated people. Mothers who have had such low education in Donaldsonville Elementary School in United States were not competent readers. France and Meeks (1987, in Morrow 1995) observed that mothers who do not have basic literacy skills are greatly handicapped in meeting the challenge of creating a "curriculum of the home" to prepare their children to succeed in school. France and Meeks further notes that mothers with low education can not help their children build a foundation for literacy because they are unable to read to them.

There are very few family literacy projects in South African (Desmond 2000) undertook a study on family literacy in South Africa. She observes that there are a few groups focusing on developing family literacy, and there are no government funding to support programmes that teach mothers to foster family literacy in South Africa. Family literacy work has not yet been recognized in the mainstream educational projects. However, the Centre for Research into Children's Literacy in the Department of Information Sciences at the University of South Africa (UNISA) and

Project Literacy, a national non governmental organisation, set up two family literacy promoting groups in Mamelodi and Winterveld, near Pretoria, and three Family Literacy Groups were established in Creighton in 2000. These literacy programmes support mothers in developing skills, knowledge and strategies to enhance family literacy in their homes even in the context of poverty.

The first of the Creighton project was launched in Mpumlwana, a remote area near the small village of Creighton in southern Drakensburg of KwaZulu Natal. An adult literacy class ran from 1997 and in 2001 changed to include family literacy. The main aim of the project was to encourage young children and their adult carers to see learning to read as a shared pleasure and a valuable skill. The work of the project is based on the belief that for young children to become literate, reading and writing must be introduced into their lives as desirable and enjoyable skills. The adults, teachers and care-givers should guide them and, by example, demonstrate the importance of literacy (Desmond 2001). The participating adults discussed ways they could support the development of early skills in their children and every session included a chance to try out a play activity. Most mothers in the groups were struggling with reading and writing. Mothers were then equipped with skills to help them and their children in letter recognition, matching, sequencing and interpreting pictures, in other words reading at its most basic, i.e. decoding, level. Mothers made books with pictures from magazines. They practiced how best to use these with their children, asking questions as well as modeling how to handle books in pairs.

Two other groups of the participants in the programme were later established. One was set up alongside under-resourced but imaginatively run pre-school classes. The second was an established adult literacy group. Story telling activities were done. It was observed that adults were so interested and enthusiastic about this that one group came an hour early to watch the teacher and children busy with a different activity. The teachers showed the mothers the portfolios they kept of each child's work and the mothers looked for the work done by their child, which was displayed on the wall.

One of the groups of mothers insisted that they do similar things to those that were done by their children.

The adult literacy group, on the other hand worked alongside a crèche that was run by two women with no early childhood development training. The sixty children in this crèche were cramped into a small rondavel with little space to do activities. The adults were happy and excited with the workshops on early literacy. They followed the same programme as the other two groups but without any input from the pre-school workers.

There was a problem of attendance with the two groups mentioned above. This was attributed to the fact that women were casual employees of a company dealing with forestry or they were working in the fields. However, there were always women in the groups because those not present sent representatives. Attendance was consistent in the third group and apologies were given when someone was not present. This was due to the fact that the group had been meeting for adult literacy lessons since 1997 and so had established a strong sense of the importance of regular attendance. Two more strategies were later employed to deal with the problem. The first was to introduce an adult literacy component into the two groups that did not have any. The second was to find creative ways of integrating adult and early literacy. An evaluation focusing on adult literacy needs was done by the Family Literacy Project. The evaluation resulted in five women chosen by their communities were given a four-week adult literacy training at Operation Upgrade in 2001. Operation Upgrade was a non-governmental organisation, which produced Adult Basic Education and Training materials and training ABET facilitators. The number of literacy groups grew to seven in 2001 (Desmond, 2001).

The adult literacy group that was established alongside a pre-school participated in activities such as the following:

The facilitator asked the women what a six year old child should know and be able to do. She then divided the women into two groups to discuss the answers. The women's

responses included things what the crèche should teach and what the children should be taught at home, or things that can be taught in both the crèche and at home.

The second lesson was on how to write a business letter. The class was given the task of writing a letter to a school asking the principal to enrol a child or a letter to a neighbour to motivate her to send her child to a crèche.

The third lesson focussed on the importance of having a crèche in the area. This was a fascinating scenario because the owner of the building where the crèche was run reclaimed the building. The task of one of the group members was to mobilise the community to ask the chief for a new site for a new crèche. The group also spent some time determining the expense of running a crèche.

The fourth lesson focussed on the importance of having a crèche in the area. The supplementary reading for this lesson was the book titled *Mothers and Young Children*. This book was written in English and translated into isiZulu for ABET Level 1. The book introduces mothers to the idea that mothers have a vital role in helping the young children to develop skills and attitudes. Activities for mothers to and young children to do together homework are also included.

The fifth lesson on early literacy focussed on how adults must care for children in and near water. The facilitator started by demonstrating the use of water, for example, how to make a sugar solution for children with diarrhoea. She then asked the participants about the dangers of water and how to protect children from the dangers. The participants were given the task of writing a poem for children with a focus on water.

The last lesson was aimed at raising the adult's consciousness of healthy diet, how certain foods help people who are HIV positive, and how to help their children to understand the importance of eating healthy food.

The facilitator was going to ask mothers to explain how they were to teach their children at home about healthy food as a follow up question. The supplementary

reading for this unit was *Stay Healthy*. This booklet *Stay Healthy* was produced by the Family Literacy Project. It covers different aspects of HIV/ AIDS, including how to care for young children affected by the pandemic (2001).

This project achieved its purpose of encouraging mothers to engage in activities that encourage early literacy with their children. The enthusiasm from participants and other people in the community led to growth of literacy groups from three to seven in 2001. Participants viewed the programme as one that would enrich and extend their family literacy practices.

2.6 Concluding comments on literature review

There is collaborative effort between the state department of education, schools and mothers in the American model of family literacy, which does not exist in South Africa. Each stakeholder in the American model plays a different role that improves family literacy. The government funds parental education that supports family literacy while the schools assist mothers and participants by running programmes that enhance family literacy.

Below is a comparison between the US and the South African practices of family literacy practices, which emerged from the literature review. The comparisons cover the levels of literacy practices within the home and, uses of and the attitudes to literacy that the mothers from different settings have. I have already mentioned that programmes that enhance family literacy are very scarce in South Africa. The South African model will be limited for that reason

2.6.1 Table 1: Comparison of literacy practices between Hispanic American and black South African low-income families

Hispanic low income families in America	Black low income families in South Africa
<p>Although the families are poor the government funds programmes that fund family literacy. They enjoy benefits from private and non-governmental funds programmes that improve the concept of family literacy.</p> <p>Mothers have high regard for their children's education. Mothers use rich culture, knowledge and context of oral literacy such as story telling used as strong part of cultural environment.</p>	<p>The South African state department of education does not fund family literacy. There are a handful of private structures that are involved in programmes that are aimed to develop family literacy.</p> <p>Mothers have high regard for family literacy but lack experience and skills on how to do it. Mothers are disadvantaged by their low literacy skills and poverty, which prohibits them to buy relevant materials to help engage and expose their children to family literacy. Oral tradition is the only inexpensive and readily available recourse that is available to most families.</p>
Mikulecky (1995)	Desmond (2001)

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

2.6.2 Table 2: Attitudes towards literacy practices and activities at home in Hispanic USA community and South African low-income families.

Hispanic low income families in America	Black low income families in South Africa
<p>Hispanic mothers in USA emphasize on letter naming and sound correspondence, explicit instruction as well as the work and practice aspects of literacy during reading session. Some activities include</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of low level of print, and employ simple language at the clause and phrase level, • Take children to libraries less than middle-income, and • Use entrenched cultural habits that enhance schooling. <p>Research also shows that mothers who are “poor” readers emphasise correct performance rather than enjoyment, fun, high comfortable literacy.</p>	<p>Mothers from Black low-income families in South Africa use a variety of models. Some mothers teach their children things like vowels and syllables and how to pronounce them, sequencing and interpreting pictures. Sometimes, they go to the extent of covering pictures to ensure children should memorise them.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practice body parts such as head, eyes, stomach during bath time. Mothers remind children when they do not understand. • Mothers use home made books with pictures from magazines to teach their children. There are no libraries in Black rural South Africa.

Although mothers from America and South African families are both poor the Hispanic families enjoy resources such as libraries that the Black South African families do not enjoy. However, the South African mothers utilise home made print material to enhance literacy in their homes.

2.6.3 *Children’s attitudes towards literacy*

Research shows that children who do not enjoy reading tend to avoid books and make reading experience painful for their parent or care-givers (Mikulecky, 1995).

The children who enjoy reading ask for books and seek attention while reading. Children who are more fluent and positive about reading come from homes where mothers and care-givers enjoy reading.

2.6.4 *The South African Scenario*

A family Literacy Project for pre-school children was underway in South Africa since March 2000. The planned duration was 2001-2002. The project was a partnership between the Children's Literature Research Unit aims to promote children's literature and reading through study, research, and community programmes. Lyster, Aitchison, Land and Keyser (unpublished) explain that Project Literacy's goal is to deliver a wide range of adult basic education and training programmes to educationally disadvantaged adults by way of adult education centres, teacher training, curriculum and community outreach.

Adult learner groups were participants in the project. Those selected were at an appropriate level of competence (presumably neither absolute beginners nor highly competent in literacy skills if simply written books were considered necessary), and who were either the mothers of preschool children or who had access to preschool children. Staff of UNISA's Children's Literature Research Unit would train these participants, that is, the Project Literacy Adult participants in reading to the children, and subsequently monitor their progress in this. In the training, the importance of reading to children, and the links between literacy practices in the home and achievement in school was communicated to the adult participants. Participants were supplied with books that would be suitable for reading to children, in addition to the easy to read books for adults to which they already had access. Books supplied for reading to children were simply written so that they would be within the level of reading competence that the adult participants had acquired. They were written in the African language spoken in their area, which meant that books in Tswana, Xhosa, Sotho, Zulu and Sepedi were distributed. English books were given to participants at on site in Johannesburg.

The project activities intended to involve:

- Training for literacy teachers and community participants,
- Support visits to participants by project staff, and
- The distribution of instructional materials, including books, stationery, crayons, scissors and photocopies.

In the evaluation of the project, Lyster, Aitchison, Land, and Keyster (forthcoming) point out some of the major challenges described by UNISA staff related particularly to communication difficulties. This was partly because participants in the project spoke different languages, and communication sometimes proved to be difficult and misunderstandings arose. In addition, the sites in rural areas were far from any major centres, and hundreds of kilometres from UNISA. Easy telephone contact was not possible because there were often no telephones near project sites, and the method of people passing on messages proved unreliable. Therefore, communication was often difficult.

On a few occasions, when UNISA staff arrived at these sites to run training to carry out observation and support visits, it was discovered that some other important event in the area, such as pension payouts, had coincided with the scheduled days. The result was that very few of the local participants were found at the site. This meant that the visits were often in vain.

Another challenge was the scarcity of easy to read books for children in African languages. Some of the books that are available in African languages are translations from English, which is less than ideal, and the illustrations are often difficult for the children to interpret. Illustrations need to be appropriate, or at least accessible to readers, and reader's ability to understand graphics needs to be developed.

It was found that among South African black people, the purpose of libraries is to provide a venue for study. To change this attitude to extend to the practice of borrowing books for reading pleasure in the home is not easy.

Because of the unfamiliarity of a reading culture and institutions such as libraries, some adults and children felt uncomfortable in libraries, and mothers were often afraid that borrowed books will be damaged in their homes.

There are many lessons to be learnt from this South African initiative (Lyster et al., forthcoming). Firstly, it is very difficult to introduce literacy practices into family and even school systems, which have always functioned without them. Reading is even seen by some participants as an antisocial, and participants did not readily accept that there was a link between reading story books and achieving well at school. Secondly, in such short interventions it is likely that only superficial changes in attitude and practices occur, and that meaningful change occurs much later, if at all. Thirdly, in terms of developing literacy practices, children tend to regress when they reach school. It seemed to project workers that this was because “very little...literacy development happens once children enter the formal schooling system”. Observing this led project workers to conclude that it would be better to target the school at the whole and to develop literacy practices across all grades.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

3.1 Introduction

This chapter introduces the research methodology and design of the research. This chapter, firstly, includes a background to the Qanda ABET centre. It also presents information about the participants in the study in the data collection methods and techniques. The research process is described and highlight tensions and dilemmas in understanding the study are discussed.

- Background to Qanda and an idea of people's lives, perceptions, experiences,
- Some information about the participants in the study, and
- Data collection methods and techniques, and the research process.

3.2 Context of study

This study was conducted at KwaQanda which nestles itself in the area known as KwaMafunze in the Vulindlela South District near the city of Pietermaritzburg. KwaQanda is 35 kilometres from Pietermaritzburg a rural area of KwaZulu-Natal Midlands. It is situated on hills overlooking the Edendale valley in the upper Edendale. The upper Edendale areas *Ngaphezulu*, meaning 'at the top'. Ngaphezulu falls under the jurisdiction of iNdllovu Regional Council. Driving west from Edendale towards Impendle, a left turn about two kilometres before the Taylors Halt and Dindi intersection brings one to kwaQanda.

The settlement inherited its name from the huge rock that overlooks the community and looks like the egg which is oval in its shape. Most people believe that the place was named after the mountainous Qanda rock, which towers above the settlement. Qanda either means an egg or cold depending on the pronunciation. *Qaanda* the pronunciation is long and this means cold, *qanda* on the other hand means an egg (the pronunciation is short). Most people, therefore, say that the rock is like an egg (*qanda*) in shape. But some believe that the place is called Qaanda because it is cold there. Traditional authorities govern the area. It is plagued by unemployment.

However, some people work in the city of Pietermaritzburg and commute between Pietermaritzburg and KwaQanda.

The community of Qanda consists of one of four small sub-tribes which fall under the Inhlangeni sub-tribe. Other sub-tribes are: eDadeni, eMvundleni and Pholanda.

There are 18 primary schools, two junior secondary, three secondary and one high school in the Vulindlela South District. Out of the 24 schools, only two are at KwaQanda and both are primary schools. There are no high schools. High school students from Qanda have to walk eight kilometres on a gravel road to get to school. The closest secondary school, Imvunulo, is not too far from the Vulindlela South Circuit Office where the Umgeni Water offices, the clinic and police station are situated.

KwaQanda is governed by tribal authority. INhlangeni is a tribal area controlled by an *inkosi*, Mr A.V. Ngcobo and Mr Xaba, the local *induna*. There is no clinic at Qanda or Nhlangeni. The nearest clinic is at Taylors Halt and that area falls under Mpumuza sub-tribe. This is the only central clinic in the Vulindlela South District and it serves many different communities. There is also a mobile clinic, staffed by nurses from Caluza Clinic, based in Edendale which comes once a month.

The nearest Police Station is at Taylors Halt where the clinic is situated. Stock theft has been identified by local police station as one of the most common crimes in the area. The whole of Vulindlela area operates on the prepaid card electricity system. According to an Eskom spokesperson in Pietermaritzburg, Amos Zuma, 1 578 houses have been electrified at Mafunze (excluding Qanda) and 798 in Qanda. The electricity supply project started in 1993 (in Vulindlela) and residents were paying a R35 connection fee for each house. However, the connection fee has gone up and people are now paying R100. The electricity project is over in the area but sub-contractors always come back to connect electricity to those who come to build in the area subsequently.

There are no community based or non-governmental organisations known to be working in the area. Although people had been involved in a sewing project in the past, the project has since dissolved. The only committee that some people know of is the Development Committee. However, the majority are not aware of its existence. The only structure they are really familiar with is tribal authority. People in KwaQanda rely on temporary jobs and the pensions of elderly family members and some are street vendors in Pietermaritzburg (Human Rights Development Project Proposal, 2004:1).

I chose KwaQanda as a site for research because I did research for *Learn with Echo* in 2000 regarding the use of this adult literacy supplement, which is published every Thursday. The research revealed that most participants enjoy Mkhize's story and most of them went to the extent of keeping the copies of *Learn with Echo*. The second reason for choosing Qanda as a research site is that it is accessible by both car and public transport, and yet is rural in character.

Similar to research on the low income groups conducted in America, it is a general assumption in the South African context that people in rural areas who have limited literacy skills do not, as a rule, engage in practices relating to literacy in their home (rural areas are areas which have low density housing. By low-density housing I mean a place where houses are far apart, with half an acre and more between them).

3.3 *The KwaQanda literacy project*

The initial work of the literacy project started in 1999. The Wesley Church (Methodist Church) became the first venue of the project before it moved to KwaQanda Primary School. The ABET classes were attended by 14 women with two or three absent. The project was initiated by Tembaletu Community Education Centre (Tembaletu), who were later supported by the Centre for Adult Education (CAE) and the Embassy of Finland. The embassy's role was to inject funding into the Human Rights, Democracy and Development Programme. Tembaletu and CAE were project leaders and responsible for executing this education for democracy project. CAE conducted

research to determine the needs for the people in order to use the funding productively.

Some of the needs, in relation to learning that were raised by the community during research include:

“I want to learn and complete education then get a good job of any kind and have all the monies because when you have money you can do anything you want and go wherever you like,” and, “I would have finished learning then get a job and build a nice house at home”

The outcome of the research was that the money will be better spent if the Human Rights Democracy and Development Education was done through ABET. Tembaletu was responsible for training tutors in understanding the role of the facilitator. CAE through its educational supplement, Learn with Echo, published learning material for the project, which is also widely distributed through the Natal Midlands including KwaQanda. The learning material focused directly on issues identified in the research as pertinent to these particular areas. The CAE’s material was written in such a way that it did not exclude the general readership of Learn with Echo which had nothing to do with the project (Human Rights Democracy and Development Project).

3.4 Participants in study

For the purpose of this study ten rural women participants who had been on an ABET programme of mother tongue literacy (IsiZulu) were selected to participate in the research. The criterion for selection was that the women had to have had two years of regular attendance in the ABE class. No other criteria was used. Some of the participants have had some experience with primary education, and some had none at all. Most of them had children who attend school at primary level. Some of their children are a level or two higher than their mothers.

3.5 Research approach

A qualitative, case study approach was used. The unit of analysis was a group of participants. In a case study, the researcher typically observes the characteristics of individual units in this case the group of ABET participants. Cohen and Manion (1989) argue that case studies are designed to probe deeply and to analyse intensively diverse trends related to the unit of analysis. In this study, the life experience of the participants who attended Tembaletu's ABE classes were examined. The role of the researcher then is to identify boundaries decide what is, in fact, inside the case, and to concentrate on the research question appropriately (Hitchcock, Hughes, 1995).

3.6 Data collection methods and techniques

The data collected was gathered from ten women who had had two years of regular attending in isiZulu mother tongue ABET class.

One-on-one interviews were used and questions of clarification where respondents did not understand were asked and answered on the spot. Interviewees received the interviewer's full attention because they were interviewed individually. I found that the women yielded valuable information because they felt secure and at ease.

As mentioned above, a variety of strategies were used to collect the required data for this qualitative study. The strategies included:

- One-on-one interviews,
- Observation and photo taking,
- Focus groups,
- Book review in which they were asked to describe a book they were familiar with,
- Individual accounts on how participants benefit from ABET, and
- Analysis of documents used by people selected for this study (a home made dictionary, receipt books).

3.6.1 Interviews

In depth interviews were conducted with ten women from KwaQanda ABET. The women left formal schooling at different grades. Five participants left school in grade five, two have never been to school, one left in grade one, one grade seven, and the highest grade completed was grade nine. The interviews were conducted at the homes of the ABET participants. The ABET facilitator accompanied me to their homes but was not part of the interviews. She accompanied me in order to show me the houses of the participants. The facilitator usually sat in the kitchen with the family of the interviewee since she knew them. There was, therefore, no interference from her. I followed the interview schedule, which is in the appendix section. Interviews were conducted in isiZulu.

In order to answer these critical questions the following questions were put to women who were interviewed:

a) Yini oyibhala ngepeni?

What do you use a pen for?

b) Yikuphi okushilo obukwenza ngepeni ngaphambi kokufunda i-ABET?

Which of the things that you have mentioned were you doing before you joined the ABET class?

c) Uyazixoxela izingane zakho izindaba ngesikhathi sokulala? Uma uzixoxela, iziphi lezozindaba? Uzixoxa kanjani lezozindaba?

Is there oral story telling at bed time? If so, which ones? How do you tell the stories? Do you use printed material, if so, which ones?

d) Ikhona yini ingane esendlini esingayibiza ukuze ungikhombise ngayo ukuthi uyixoxela kanjani izindaba noma izinganekwane zasebusuku? Uma ingane ingekho, ngicela ungichazele ukuthi uyixoxa kanjani indaba?

Is there any child at home now that we can call, so you can demonstrate how you tell bed time stories? If there is none now please describe to me how you tell stories.

e) Iguqukile yini indlela obona ngayo izincwadi ngaphambi kokuqala izifundo ze ABET?

Has your attitude to books changed since attending ABET class?

f) Yini ocabanga ukuthi uyifundile eklasini? Ukusebenzisa kanjani okufundile emzini wakho?

What do you think you have learnt in class? How do you use it in your family?

g) Ngicela ungikhombise noma yini ewumbhalo ekhona endlini (kungaba incwadi yomkhuleko, incwadi yamaculo asesontweni, uMkhize noma i-Learn with Echo, uhlelo lomabona kude lwansukuzonke, incwadi oholá ngayo (pay slip)? Uzitholaphi lezizinto?

Can you please show me printed material you have at home (e.g. prayer book, church hymns, uMkhize or Learn with Echo, television guides, pay slips) where you get them?

h) Yini eniyifunda ndawonye njengomndeni?

What do you read together as a family?

i) Yini ewumbhalo ocabango ukuthi ijwayelwe ukufundwa yimindeni yalendawo?

What is the printed material most read by other families in your opinion?

j) Iziphi izinhlelo zomsakazo ozilalelayo, uzilalelelani?

What radio programmes do you listen to, why?

k) Iziphi izinto ozifundayo ezishicilelwe ngolimi lwesiZulu, isiNgisi njengezikhangisi eziba semaphephandabeni, noma izimemezelo zolunye uhlobo)?

What other materials do you read in isiZulu, English (e.g advertising supplement of the news paper, flyers, etc)?

l) Uyigcina kanjani imininingwane yakho efana namarisidi, amakhalenda, imibiko yabantwa yasezikoleni (amariphothi: amarisidi efenisha ekhaya, nokunye?

How the records and documents are kept at home (receipts, clinic cards, calendars, school reports, receipts for furniture, etc)?

I have used prompting as a follow up to the questions when the participants look puzzled and uncertain. Prompting helped participants to appropriately respond to the questions. I don't think that I would have elicited the required information from most participants if prompting was not done.

3.6.2 *Observation*

Observations were conducted in each of the homes. In addition permission was sought to photograph the parent and the child engaged in the book reading activity, where the mother reads to her child or helps the child with homework. The mother was asked to first demonstrate how she taught her child or children and after a few minutes of demonstration, I asked for permission to take a photo. The photos have yielded a lot of information about interaction, and the way in which book reading is happening in an African tradition. A more detailed discussion on photos is in chapter 4 and 5.

I also made a point of observing printed materials on the walls of people's homes such as calendars, religious materials, or copies of news papers and *Learn with Echo* or stickers of *Learn with Echo*. I checked if it was conventionally displayed, in other words if it was not upside down, and more importantly, if the calendar displayed the current month.

The participants, who told folk stories (izinganekwane) to their children, also demonstrated how they told them. Some of the participants showed me how they sign

their signature which is something that they could not do before. The signature of one of the participants is printed on appendix section.

3.6.3 *Focus group interviews*

The focus group interviews were planned with all the participants. There were only six participants who attended the focus group. I ran the focus group in the classroom where the participants met. There was a man in the group who was not one of the people who I interviewed earlier. He sat in the group because I ran this interview during the class time. The questionnaire for the focus group was different to the individual interviews. The following questions were put in isiZulu to the group:

- Ubazisa kanjani abantwana bakho ngesiko lesintu (izinto ezifana nenhlonipho no cansi)?
How do you pass on cultural wisdom (i.e. respect, sex and sexuality, customs and culture) to your children?
- Ubani osiza umntwana ngomsebenzi wesikole, lowo omsizayo umsiza kanjani?
When your child brings back homework from school, who helps him or her, how?
- Uma lowo osiza umntwana ngomsebenzi wesikole engakwazi ukumsiza ubani osizayo?
If the person that helps with homework does not understand it, where do they seek help?
- Nicabanga ukuthi obani okumele basize abantwana ngomsebenzi wasekhaya?
Who do you think should help children with homework?
- Kuyithuthukise kanjani imfundo ukufunda kwakho i-ABET emzini wakho?
How has your ABET experience influenced learning or reading in your home?
- Zikhona izinto zokufunda kwakho ezikhuthaza ukufunda, uma zingekho kugani?
Is there any reading material in your home that assists you to foster the culture of learning in your home, if not why?
- Ucabangani umphakathi wakho ngokufunda kwakho izifundo ze ABET?
What does your community think about your attendance of ABET class?

The purpose of the focus group was to determine how cultural wisdom is passed from mothers to children, who is responsible for the children's homework and their perceptions about it, ascertain their perception of the community's view of the ABET class and the ABET learner. Data from the focus group was intended to enrich data obtained from individual interviews.

3.6.4 Book Reviews

One of the questions asked during the interview was about a story that the women were reading at the time of interview. The ABET teacher loans the participants books to read at home. I asked participants to tell me what the book was about and then recorded their responses in my notebook. I then asked to borrow the book to assess whether the story they told me was congruent with the one in the book.

I was very impressed because those who were reading books at the time were accurate in what they told me and what I read in the books. The stories recorded under the individual interviews were the ones that were related to me during the interviews. In my narrative report of what they said, I have quoted interviews as directly as possible.

3.6.5 Document Analysis

Various documents found in the home were analysed. Participants were requested to write their experience about attending ABET and how it influenced their literacy practices. The essays were intended to show if there was any correlation between the information yielded during the interview and what was discussed on the essays.

Other documents included a home made dictionary, which is reproduced under 4.2.1. Her dictionary provides information, which is valuable for demonstrating the skills obtained as a result of attending ABET classes. I have also captured that as evidence of her learning. One of the participants is involved in writing poetry at home during her spare time. I was unable to get a piece of her poetry.

3.6.6 Data analysis

The data sets were organised according to each research question, and across each of the data collection tools. The data was examined to identify the major themes and patterns that emerged with each of the research questions. This analysis led me to build a full, detailed picture of people's literacy practices and the extent to which their literacy practices have changed as a result of their participation in adult basic education classes run by Tembaletu. I entered the responses of the participants with respect to each of the research questions drawing data across the data collection methods and the ten participants. In order to answer these critical questions mentioned above, the research process led to the following data sets being obtained from participants.

Table 3: Data sets in the study

Research questions	Data Sets			
	Individual interviews	Focus group interviews	Document analysis or description on homework activities	Observation
1	Use of pen at home.	Focus on how cultural wisdom is passed on to children.	Home-made dictionary, recipe books produced through listening baking programmes from radio.	The manner in which a participant express herself and their attitude about ABET.
2	Oral or bed time story telling.	Ascertain who helps children with homework. Who helps in case participants do not know? Who should help with homework?	No documents analysed, participants described how they assist children. Participants described and then demonstrated with the children.	How children interact with mothers during homework and bedtime story telling sessions.
3	Attitude to books.	How has ABET experience enhanced learning in the home.	Any documentation produced by participant such as pictures, poetry and so on.	Any written material at home, e.g. Learn with ECHO, books, newspapers and so on.
4	Individual reading and reading as a family.	Ascertain reading materials that assist in fostering culture of learning in the house.	Participants showed me and described stories read. I read the same books to see if there was correlation with what participants told me.	Participants interacting with their children during family reading time.

3.7 Limitation of the study

There were a number of obstacles that affected the way the research was conducted. I was able to deal with the obstacles in a creative way so they did not become stumbling blocks. I did not use the tape recorder to tape the interviews because I did not want to be intrusive. However, it took too long to write down the participant's responses during interviews.

Communication with the ABET facilitator (Khumbuzile Kheswa) who liaised between learners and me, the research, was difficult because there are no telephones in KwaQanda. It was further complicated by the fact that if I wanted to communicate with the facilitator, I would call her friend on his cellular phone. The network was not always clear and sometimes seemed to be out of action. The cellular phone owner would sometimes be away from KwaQanda for a number of days, which meant the message would not reach the facilitator on time. Some messages were left on the voicemail, which were not communicated, to the facilitator in time. In these circumstances I drove to kwaQanda on the days the participants were attending in the hope of meeting them.

The distance between KwaQanda and Durban where I live is relatively far. It was not always possible or affordable to travel to KwaQanda to make appointments prior to meeting the people due to lack of telephonic communication. In order to clarify questions, and issues that came up from interviews, I wrote to the facilitator who graciously replied on time using the fast mail envelop. I bought ten fast mail envelops, addressed them to myself and left them with the facilitator. When I needed follow up information, sometimes she would delay because she would be attending training workshops outside KwaQanda for her own development. But our arrangement worked very well.

Some participants in the study did not honour appointments due to emergencies in their lives. I found that one participant was taking her grand child to the doctor when I got to her house. She said she would have phoned me if she had known my number.

The interviews were conducted in winter (July). Winter is the time for building houses because there are no rains. On one occasion, I came across three participants who were in the process of building a new house or conducting repairs. This resulted in some delay because the women had to leave their work, wash their hands, and then sit down for an interview. Some of them even wanted to wash sunscreen cream off their faces when it was time to take photos. The facilitator also mentioned that ABET attendance in winter dwindles because it is time for building. The women harvest grass to re-thatch their houses, cut wattle sticks, and collect water to build their houses during winter. The advantage of building in winter is that it is always dry with no rains. Mud used in building dries quicker at this time.

Interviewing learners at home also proved to be a disadvantage. Although they knew about the research and appointment, I found them in the middle of their household chores when I arrived. The research seemed an

3.8 Research process: Tensions and dilemmas

I first met the participants (described in the last chapter) on the 9th July 2003. I arrived at KwaQanda Primary School where classes are held at 14h30. The ABET facilitator arrived on time with two participants, then the other three arrived 20 minutes late. Seeing that it was getting late, the facilitator introduced me and asked me to explain why I was there. I explained that I was a student at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (Pietermaritzburg) and that I was studying for Masters in Education at the Centre for Adult Education. I told them that I was doing research on how adult literacy learnings are used in the home (family literacy) and the value literacy has in the home and the KwaQanda community. I explained that I would interview them in the comfort of their homes because I would like them to demonstrate for me how they help their children to learn at home. After explaining my research, I requested participants to spend 45 minutes to one hour with me in individual interviews in their homes. They were very reluctant to invite me into their homes. Some of the responses and whispering I heard in the room included:

“My home is dirty I don’t want any stranger, it would have been better if we were warned then I would clean it”;

“What is he going to see in my home, I am poor, I don’t have anything?”

“What is he going to see in my house?”

“Are these interviews part of the examinations?”

“We don’t want individual interviews but the whole group must be interviewed together”

I responded to the fears by assuring them that my aim was not to do any inspection to their homes or give them an examination. The ABET facilitator did a lot of persuading before the participants agreed to participate. She referred to previous research that has been done by Mthembeni Dlamini in 2001 (researchers from the Centre for Adult Education at the university of KwaZulu-Natal who evaluated the project they are involved in and others) and mentioned that there was no threat. The facilitator finally explained that I was doing similar research to what the other researchers did with them and would not give them a test or examination. It took twenty minutes to persuade them to agree.

When the facilitator referred to these other researchers they immediately agreed because it is something they have done before. Adults, generally, don’t want to be thrown in the deep end. They would rather do something they know about than what they don’t know about.

The fears they expressed were valid as far as they were concerned, about the fear unknown. Some of the fears I think had to do with the fact that I am an adult male, and they are vulnerable to rape and scandal. Their husbands do not live at home because they are migrant workers. The neighbours or relatives could spread unfounded rumours about them being visited by a strange man. Although I explained that the facilitator would accompany me to their homes I think some were not comfortable with being interviewed at home because of their jealous husbands. It was not going to be easy for the husbands to allow them to agree to me interviewing them since I was a stranger.

Their other fear has to do with poverty. They felt that I was going to look at their meagre possessions in their homes, and felt embarrassed about inviting me into their homes. The facilitator and I dealt with the first two problems by her accompanying me to all the homes. This was a long walk which she did with much enthusiasm. My response to their fears of having their poverty exposed was to say that I was not going to inspect the houses but wanted to see the interaction between mothers and their children at home, especially where these interactions involved literacy. After the discussion and persuasion we made appointments to see the five people who were present. The facilitator was kind enough to let me interview them during class time. The first interview started at 4h45 and the last was at 20h00.

I made every attempt to keep the interviews with the women as informal and as relaxed as possible. Nevertheless, some of the women were initially nervous about the types of questions they would be asked. I also re-iterated during the interview that the information yielded would remain confidential, as it was not meant for assessment on their performance in class for Tembaletu or their facilitator. Some of them seemed relaxed and forthright in answering the interview questions after that. The women were so kind that even if the interview took longer than the time that was requested; they would stay until the end of the interview. None of them hurried me to finish.

CHAPTER 4: DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

This study yielded rich data from the participants (refer to appendix two). The raw data was analysed in terms of the three research questions across each of the data collection tools, that is, interviews, observations, focus group interviews, document analysis etc. To remind the reader, the three research questions were:

- What are the literacy practices in the families of the ten women participating in an ABET class in a rural context?
- What influence did the ABE programme have on these practices?
- What concept of family literacy is emerging in this rural context?

4.2 Family literacy practices of participants

The study attempted to explore what family literacy practices were occurring in the families of the ten women, and what were family and community attitudes to literacy practices that were emerging.

4.2.1 Story telling versus reading to children

Story telling differs from family to family. The age group of the children in each family also influences it. Of the ten women only two tell bedtime folk stories. The stories told have been told to the participants by their mother. Some of the stories were cultural in nature and some come from the books they read. The participants explained that they tell the stories when the family is sitting together in the lounge. The younger children are expected to remember the story when the mother asks questions after the story has been told. It was clear that this demand related strongly to their association of all literacy with formal education, and their desire for their children to achieve well at school.

Those who fall asleep during story telling are woken up to hear the end because it may contain an important lesson that they need to hear and understand. The mother dismisses the children after the story has been told.

The concept of reading to children is done differently in the some mothers in this study read stories during the day and narrate them to their children when they come home after school,

Mrs Duma explains...

"I enjoy telling bed time stories that I remember from her stories that my mom told me. I tell stores like Illahle no Bontshisi (the bean and coal)".

"The story goes like this", explains Mr Duma:

"The coal and the bean went to swim. They argued about who wanted to go into the water first. The bean said to coal: "you go first" and the coal said, "you start fist". Eventually the coal started to swim and the water put out the fire that was burning in him. Bean laughed at her until she broke into pieces".

Mrs Nzuke also tells stories to her family. She tells stories about a cannibal who used to hunt and eat people who lived in the vicinity of his cave.

"I don't like it when children sleep when I tell stories because they have important lessons at the end" says Ms Nzuke "I tell them stories that I read books during the day. I tell them this story:"

"the cave was near the house, which was occupied by two orphan children. One day the children went to look for food. They saw a man calling them in their search for food. They went towards him thinking that it was a human being who intended to help them get out of their hunger situation. But it was a cannibal. He kept them in the cave with him. He did not eat or injure them because he was fond of them. One day he went out to hunt for food and left the children alone in the cave. The children then skipped and went away. The cannibal came back and the children were not there. He then went looking for the children and found the house where they lived. The children saw him and took pangas and a chopper, and they stood at the door getting ready to fight with him. The cannibal managed to swallow them with their weapons and went back to his cave. The children waited until he fell asleep, then cut him open and he died. They got out, and then ran away. End".

Both Philisiwe Mkhize and Zanele Thabethe tell stories to their children. The participants do not have designated time in which they tell stories. Mr Mkhize tells stories to her children when they come home from school. She does not necessarily tell them folk stories she read from literature books as well. Thabethe, on the other hand, tells her children what she learned at ABET classes during the day. She had read a book about HIV/AIDS before the interview. She related what she read in the book to her children. The stories she relates are, therefore, education in nature.

It is apparent from the evidence presented above that story telling is done differently according to the family pattern. Most mothers, therefore, do not read stories to their children at night. Story reading has not been part of African culture therefore it is not a common thing even among the educated and high-income families.

4.2.2 Engaging with school base literacy

Most women admitted that they did not think that homework was part of their responsibility because their mothers did not help them when they were at school some of the women never thought of the importance of homework in their children's lives, and that mothers play important role in their children's education. Some still maintain that helping with homework was not their responsibility.

"I never", says Mrs Mnguni, "helped my children with homework because my mothers did not help me. I was also under the impression that children do school work at school and come home to rest".

I think the main problem with helping children with homework was that the mothers did not have much experience with school and were ignorant of it. It is more a questions of ignorance that not wanting to assist their children.

The participant's engagement with their children has been very fascinating because it is impacted by the different levels of mother and child. If, for instance, the participant is at a level below her child, the child would assist the mother. If the child is in a level lower than mother, the mother would assist her. If the mother is in the same level as the child they would support each other on homework. Those

participants who were helped by their children with homework stated that they were not ashamed. Instead the atmosphere in the room would be friendly, and relaxed. In fact, there was competition and creative discussion among mothers and their children. In line with the above views, Zanele Thabethe said:

“my level of education assists only those children who are below grade 5. Those above grade 5 are disadvantaged because I am not able to help them. However, I get help from ABET teacher or neighbours for them.”

Mr Duma, on the other hand, helps her daughter who is struggling with vowels and syllables. She first inspects her daughter’s exercise book and then picks up mistakes, which she addresses during the homework time (see appendix: A for more details). Although Ms Mkhize mentioned that she should play a role in her children’s education, she does not have a scheduled time to help them with homework. They seek her help with what they do not understand.

Zanele Mbatha has never been to school. She and her ten-year-old son enjoy doing homework together. They sit at the table alone and do their homework individually. They ask each other in case one does not understand.

Ms Ngcobo enjoys competing on English vocabulary with her school going children. Homework in her family is done individually, and those who need help ask each other for it.

4.2.3 Community views on family literacy

Community perceptions of learning literacy as an adult varies. Some people think participants waste their time by attending ABET. Some of the comments made to the participants by the community include:

“You are wasting your time by attending ABET classes.” (a neighbour of Ms Duma).

In response to this Ms Duma said:

"I am not put off by such comments. Instead I am better off than them because I can now read and understand English better than them,"

Ms Nomsa Mchunu also received the same comments. Her neighbour said:

"You are wasting your time." Comments Ms Mchunu, "because you will not get any employment after you completed your ABET. This is a source of encouragement for me because these comments assure me that I am doing well. These people are jealous of me so they try to discourage me."

Some of the comments are harsh on the participants, for example,

"Ufundela ukufa" This means you are learning for your death.

"Some of my neighbours think I'm too old to learn to learn anything because it won't help me I'm about to die. Some of the members of the community encourage me they think my effort to attend ABET is great. The latter view encourages me." (said Ms Duma)

The comments made to the participants indicate to me that the community does not understand that one must be literate first, to understand family literacy. Evidence from the research conducted by Lord and Benjamin (1996) proves that mothers' literacy is of utmost importance in considering family literacy. The authors argue that mothers must enhance their own literacies first before they can provide an environment, which enhances the literacies of their own children.

4.2.4 Supporting children in personal/ social development through family literacy

Transfer of cultural values and norms from mothers to children is still very important in the community of KwaQanda. In the olden days, the mothers used to initiate discussions and interactions about culture. But with the modern technology, it seems that children initiate such discussions because they sometimes ask questions based on what they have seen from the television or read at school.

Findings in this study suggest that the parents were in line with the Zulu African tradition because traditionally, the parent calls the children to sit together as a family.

Sometimes there is a need to separate boys from the girls depending on the topic. Mother or father talks to the children about a particular topic, e.g. respect, girl's self discipline, relationships, virginity testing, menstruation and demonstrates how to handle sanitary pads. The father speaks about the role of a boy, and prepares him for manhood. Boys cover issues such as puberty, sexuality and that the role of a man is to be a provider, care-giver and to love and respect his family.

On the question of media, sex and sexuality some mothers say that when there is a lot of sex on the television they switch off. Some mothers said they do not switch it off because their children know about it from school and peers. Instead, some said the sex scenes from television series provide them with the opportunity to talk to their children.

4.3 The impact of the Tembaletu ABET programme on participant's literacy practices

4.3.1 Literacy and personal empowerment

For most women, ABET helped to develop and enhance viewing television programmes that they enjoy. Some feel that they are now *free* from the bondage of ignorance.

Ms Duma said:

"I am now watching television with ease because I understand what is said since I can now understand my favourite programmes such as Generations. Watching Generations also helps improving my English."

Ms Mnguni explained:

"I used to look at pictures in the magazines and books but now I am able to read them. I am very interested in the English media because it helps in improving my English. I am now able to watch my favourite show Generations. English is not much of a barrier anymore."

Although some participants like Zanele Thabethe had some schooling experience, she never had the confidence of signing her name when required to sign. She mentioned that,

"I never had confidence of signing my name in a bank slip. I used a thumbprint even though I have some schooling. I left school in grade 5. Now I know more about HIV/ AIDS and my rights, conflict management which I learnt from English at Work I loaned from the ABET teacher. I enjoy watching Generations because I learn new English vocabulary."

Zanele Mbatha who has never been to school mentioned that,

"I can now take telephone numbers, sign notices from school and writing invitation cards. ABET enabled me to compile my own recipe book."

Zandile Ndlovu wrote:

"I can now read what is written on the television screen and understand English when watching it. Attending ABET has helped me because I could not read my child's name during feeding or nappy change when I went for baby delivery. I can read street names."

In my interview discussion with Zanele Ngcobo, she alluded to the following:

"I compete with my school going children on English vocabulary. My weakness is getting the spelling right. I am 37 now because I was born on 14th April 1960. I did not know when I was born but now I know. Doctors who do not speak isiZulu had difficulty in treating me if there is no translation because I did not understand English. At least now I can say what is wrong with me. I can also count my money now."

Similar to Ngcobo's case, Nomusa Mchunu maintains:

"I find it easier to talk to a doctor about my problems now than before. I do not trust translation but prefer speaking to doctors directly. I wish to see more people attending ABET classes since the rate of illiteracy is so high here at kwaQanda. If I can get into people's hearts I would recruit and tell them how it helped me with vocabulary and other needs."

The findings suggest that ABET has done a lot of good for the participants. The gains from ABET far outweigh the negative comments passed by the community about adult education. Their description of how ABET helped them resembles a blind person who gained sight. This research has also confirmed the view that literacy behaviour is influenced by how mothers conceive of literacy. Smith (1994) when writing about the power of story and narration said the human brain is a narrative device. Stories run naturally and facts and incidents can be remembered much more readily for retellings if they are linked to a meaningful sequence. Wells (1986) maintains that older people use stories and narration to help understand their own growth and development because stories are a natural extension of their lives and the meanings they are trying to gain. Stories provide a route for older people to understand themselves.

4.3.2 Being literate and self-image

The negative comments made by the community to participants did not discourage any of them. Instead, it seemed participants took strength from such comments and pressed on with what they believed is right for them. I observed the confidence and pride the women displayed when they spoke about what ABET did for them.

Ms Duma mentioned during our discussion that:

"I enjoy reading English from Learn with Echo because it helps me to learn to speak English fluently. The children sometimes read Learn with Echo aloud and I correct them where necessary."

Ms Mnguni commented:

"Attending ABET has taken away my ignorance. I realise that mothers should help their children with homework"

Zandile Ndlovu wrote:

"The ABE programme has helped in building confidence in me. Some of my neighbours looked down upon me. They did not want to speak to me because I am uneducated and they saw me as a barbarian. But now I know my rights, and can differentiate between a loving and abusive relationship. The people who looked down on me give me a lot of respect now.

My attendance has also improved my self-image at home because my husband used to tease me by saying that he does not speak to an uneducated person but now he does not tease me because he asks me most of things to do with life."

A participant commented:

Attending ABET classes helped me a lot because I could not identify my child when I had a baby at the hospital before attending ABET classes, This happened despite the fact that children had names on their wrist. But now I would be able to read an identity tag because I can read and write. I can now read directions to the shops, and, more importantly directions to take medicines and observe expiry dates."

These comments suggest that attending ABET has been beneficial in bolstering the women's self image.

4.3.3 Life skills learnt

Participants have learnt a wide range of life skills through ABET. All the participants learnt something important about life especially HIV/AIDS, filling application form singing their name and so on. The table below provides information on what some participants learnt:

Table 4: Life skills learnt by some of the participants

Learner	Life skills learnt
Mnguni Ntombikhona	Drug literacy, helps in teaching children about drugs and to take precautionary measures.
Thabethe Zanele	Baking, and cooking lessons from Ukhozi FM. Compiled recipe book. She cooks delicious and healthy food for the family. The radio announcer dictates the recipe and the participants (Thabethe and Mbatha) write down instructions on their home made recipe books.
Mbatha Zanele	Baking and cooking lessons from Ukhozi FM. Recipe book has been compiled. Family benefits because it eats healthy and delicious food. Workplace skills, skills such as interview skills, time management, and rights in the work place. She benefited in knowing more about the world at work.
Mchunu Nomsa	Use of machinery at work and personal safety and team work.

4.4 Interrogating the concept of family literacy in a rural context

4.4.1 Introduction

In rural South Africa, Programmes that support family literacy are a new concept. The Family Literacy Project, which started in March 2000, in the deep small rural towns of Underberg, Himeville and Creighton of the province of KwaZulu-Natal (Desmond, 2001). It has not been possible to locate any other programmes that have been documented. The Family Literacy Project was established with the intention of enhancing family literacy. It was meant to encourage young children and their adult carers to see learning to read as a shared pleasure and a valuable skill.

Shared reading is viewed by many researchers in the field as means for children to succeed with literacy (Chomsky, (1972); Laosa, (1982); Anderson, Hiebert, Scott, Wilkinson, (1985); Teale and Sulzby, (1986); Lancy and Bergin (1992).

In the present study, Participants were not trained in strategies to help their children with reading and to encourage early literacy. They were trained in Adult Basic Education. However, in this study, the skills gained by participants in ABET were used in their family literacy practices. This study reveals that early literacy in the low-income families is limited by poverty. It is commendable to see the extent to which participants in this research have gone to achieve literacy skills that they try to impart to their children. The women did not have money to take their children on excursions or to a library (which is 35 Kilometres away) but they used available materials such as ABET books (that they loaned from their facilitator) and *Learn with Echo*- the witness Newspaper supplement. It is encouraging that in the context of so much poverty and illiteracy, the women are taking the concept of family literacy so seriously. These women do labour-intensive work during the day and attend classes in the afternoon, and help their children with homework in the evening.

4.4.2 Family literacy and cultural influences

This research makes one conclude that oral tradition is still retained in this context as a medium to pass on information to the younger generation. Subject such as the controversial virginity testing, sexuality, and relationships are covered in family discussions. Participants refer to visual materials such as television programmes, and print material for information on these subjects. The finding that oral tradition is still retained as a medium to pass on information to younger generation, complements Morrow's (1995) point that cultural practices can enrich practices of family literacy. Her view is that family literacy must be studied from a broad perspective by respecting cultures in which on books exist but where story telling is a strong part of the cultural environment.

Interactions within families during family literacy practices play a major role in predicting children's later reading success in school that merely reading to children (Snow and Goldfield, 1983; Snow, Barnes, Chandler, Goodman and Hemphil, 1991; Beals, 1992).

4.4.3 Links between family literacy and ABET literacy programmes

Gadsen (1994) notes that family literacy programmes generally describe their purpose as improving parent's literacy to ensure literacy development of the child. Less attention has been given to the quality of relationship between programme and parent or parent and child (Gadsen 1994:9). It is significant that this study examined what happens in the family context in relation to the newly acquired skills by ABET participants. The study attempted to understand how and why literacy skills are used. A conclusion one can make is that the design of an ABET programme should take into account what literacy practices happen in the family.

4.4.4 Mothers as partners in a rural context

The study of Family Literacy Project (Desmond, 2001), which was conducted in the rural towns of KwaZulu Natal, suggests that there is a very strong involvement and close links between schools and the mothers. Mothers in my research study have reported that they check children's workbooks and identify areas in which they can help their children. Ms Zibuyile Duma realised her daughter's weakness that she struggled with some vowels and consonants then she thought her this skill. However, the issue of whether these ten women have strong links with schools or actively interacted with their children's teachers was not evident. It is likely that such practices will emerge as the women further develop their literacy skill sand their self-confidence.

The photograph below shows one of the sessions the mother has with her daughter.



Photograph 1: Ms Duma and her daughter demonstrates home work session

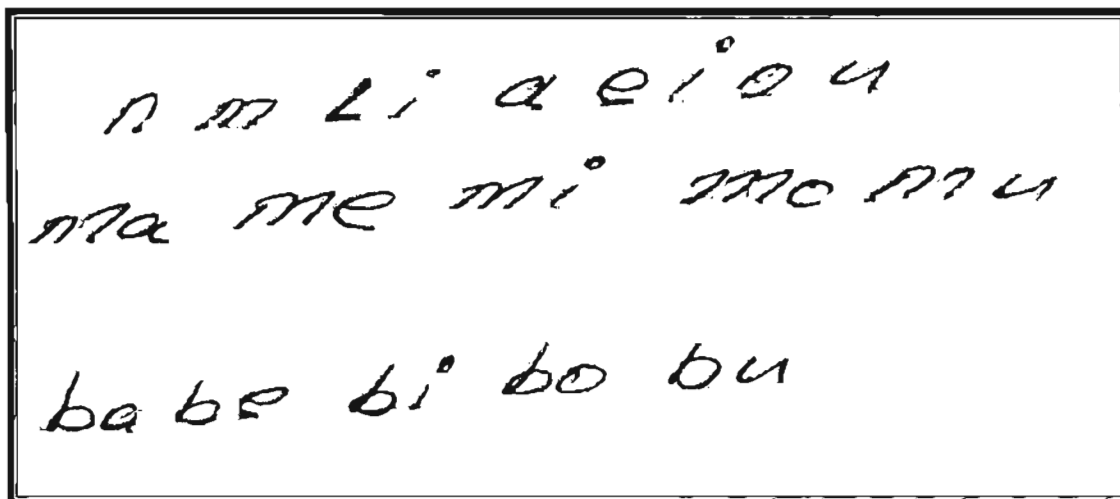


Illustration 1; Ms Duma's own handwriting, used during homework session

Observing Duma's style of teaching, I noted that she uses the oldest most traditional literacy teaching methods. She started off the session by randomly wiring letters, she moved to vowels, and then reverted to the most traditional way of ma, me, mi, and so on. This is an established, formal and prescriptive approach to literacy.

4.4.5 Family literacy in the context of HIV/ AIDS

Participants have done their utmost best to read more about HIV/AIDS. They read government materials on HIV/AIDS and then educate their children about it. The research conducted by Pietermaritzburg Agency for Christian Awareness at Mpumzuza (2003) paints a gloomy picture about family literacy in relation to HIV/AIDS and poverty. The researchers Ganrich, Njenga, Moleko and Xaba (2003) noted that supervision of homework by mothers has been compromised by a combination of factors. These include prevalence of AIDS, illiteracy and the fact that women have long working hours performing household chores, and still have to care for those who are suffering from AIDS. They are too tired to supervise homework. It is worth noting that these factors impinge on family literacy and the ability of children to do well in schools, although the factors did not emerge in my study.

4.4.6 Gender and family literacy practices

The research has confirmed the observation that women are more involved in their children's schoolwork than men. In fact, nine participants of this study were originally women and the tenth one was a male (John Velasingazi Nzuke). Nzuke could not answer all my questions, he therefore, asked me to interview his wife because she was directly involved with children's schooling activities. Mr Nzuke was one of the KwaQanda ABET participants. I interviewed him because he was part of the class and thought he would bring in an interesting perspective to the research. It was interesting that he directed me to his wife when we started talking about supporting his children with literacy, homework, and so on. He said that he does not help with homework therefore I should speak to his wife when it comes to homework. His wife is involved in helping the children with homework. I am not sure whether he saw the role of helping children with homework as something that should be done by the mother or whether he is not available to help with homework.

4.4.7 Tensions between ABET programmes and family literacy practices

The study revealed that there is no integration of family literacy in the ABET programme. In contrast, Hendrix (1999) asserts that family literacy education in USA does not effectively integrate adult education. Literacy/English as second Language or parent-child interaction time into programming. Similarly, ABET, as a programme does not mediate family literacy skills to adult participants so that they can impart them to their children. Hence, learners may not be adequately prepared to impart the skills that they have to their children or create a conducive environment for effective learning of their children to take place. This has been evident in my research. Participant's primary objectives for participating in the programme were, among others, to be able to read a Bible, to get a job, and so on. None said that they participated in order to enhance their children's schooling. Yet this happened with the ten women in this study. They admit the programme enhanced family literacy practices in the home.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUDING COMMENTS

The research revealed that the participants in this study who were participants in an Adult Education programme engaged in family literacy in on way to other. However, it is important to mention that according to the ten women, family literacy practices in the home are not tightly structured or scheduled. In other words, there are not particular times set aside for practices such as homework sessions or be time story reading.

The literacy practices observed in the study are simple but very important in the lives of the women. The evidence in this research indicates that participants have indeed gained skills that enabled them to manage independently literacy related activities. Participants no longer ask people where shops are because they can now read themselves. They can now read product names of what they want to buy. They no longer rely on security guards to help them fill deposit, withdrawal and transfer slips in the bank. They no longer rely on other people when using auto-banking machines.

The research found that the pen is used on daily basis in the homes of the participants. The pen is used for three main literacy practices: domestic activity, business, and homework in the adult education programme. The domestic use includes activities such as written short messages to neighbours, inviting people to an *umsebenzi* (traditional ceremony), to communicate something to neighbours, to write letter to their husbands, relatives and friends who live far from KwaQanda, filling in lotto tickets, and taking down directions from cooking programmes on Ukhozi FM. Only two participants mentioned that they use for the two latter items. Most of them indicated that they use the pen for invitations for parties. This is a new practice in black communities where previously people relied on work of mouth. The business use for the pen is solely to issue receipts to customers in the block-making programme. Only one learner uses it for purposes of business.

All participants mentioned that they use it for their own and their children's homework. Some who could not sign or check the child's homework are knowable to do so with ease. This demonstrates that there is rich use and practices of skills gained from ABET in literacy practices in the home. The practices mentioned by participants seem very simple and unimportant to those from a sophisticated literacy background. However, the point to be made is that whether one has sophisticated skills or not, we all use a pen on occasions for the same activities as the participants in the study.

This indicates that there is so much potential for programmes such as the Family Literacy Project. For instance, the women in the Creighton Family Literacy (Desmond 2001) who had literacy practices made explicit to them were advantaged in that they could then enhance family literacy in their homes. They were equipped with skills they needed to enhance their children's literacy.

The present research consistently supports the conclusion that when mothers become literate, they will do more to support their children's schooling. This means that ABET, children's schooling, and family literacy complement each other. Lauglo (2001) advances the argument that women who have completed literacy programmes become more deeply engaged in supporting their children's education in various ways. The participants in the study read books during the day when the children are at school, and then choose sections and issues that will be interesting to read to the children at night. Literature that was widely read by the ten women at the time of the research was published by the Department of Health and related to HIV/ AIDS. The articles they read from *Learn with Echo* included topics on diseases such as cholera and diarrhoea. They could engage with issue and topics their children were learning in the context of the school curriculum.

The research findings showed the impact of the literacy practices gained in the ABE programme on the well being of the families. It has increased their awareness of health issues and healthy living, helped them to manage their lives better, to know their rights, and instilled a culture of reading in them. With respect to health, they are able to access and learn from cooking programmes on the radio. They are able to

determine whether foodstuff has expired or not, and they can read about HIV and healthy living. Lauglo (2001) argues that literate adults are healthier and raise healthier children. Jayne (1999) and LeVine (1999) maintain that there is a link between mother's education and infant or child health. The authors advance the view that educated mothers use health and contraceptive services more, and more frequently adopt domestic practices favourable to child survival. The other finding by Bown (1990) and Comings (1995) is that literate mother's are more likely to have their children vaccinated, to know about oral dehydration, to provide better nutrition, and to space their pregnancies. The benefits that the women in the present study gained as far as health through their new literacy practices are important for the well being of their families.

In South Africa, only a few non-governmental organisations such as Project Literacy, Family Literacy Project in KwaZulu Natal, and the Centre for Research into Children's Literacy in the Department of Information Sciences at the University of South Africa (UNISA) have, so far, embarked on programmes that encourage family literacy in South Africa. Since the work is at an infancy stage, there is no doubt that the findings in this study will provide valuable perspectives on emerging family literacy practices in a rural context.

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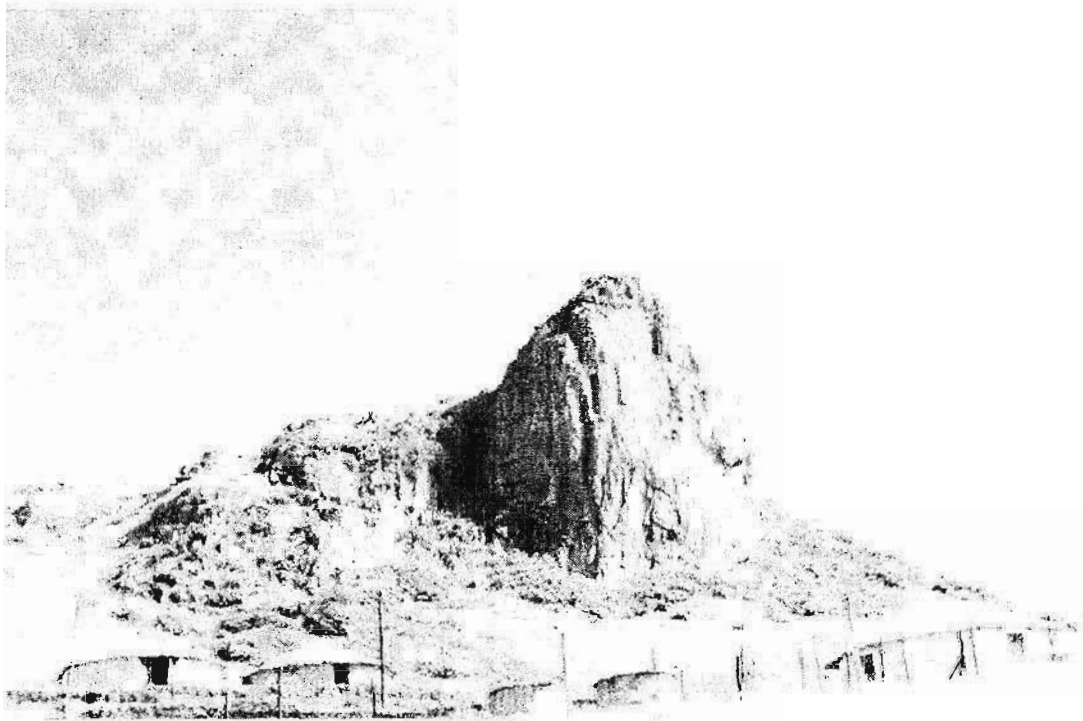
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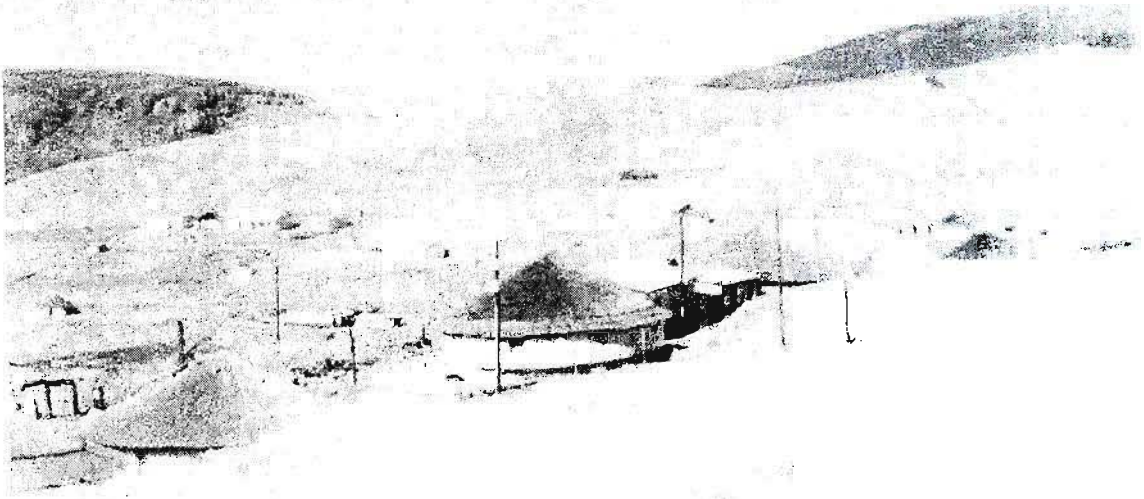
APPENDICES

APPENDIX ONE: PHOTO GALLERY

Photo 2: The rock, which the area was named after



Photograph 3: The view of KwaQanda



APPENDIX TWO: ACCOUNTS FROM INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWS

All the women who participated in this study make an early start to days that are filled with tasks necessary to maintain their homes and provide for their children. The tasks include drawing water from the well, fetching wood for fuel, gardening, shopping, and cleaning the house, working in the block making projects and attending ABET classes in the afternoon. Their tasks sometimes go to the extent of repairing the houses. The type and nature of work the women do leave them with no time for relaxation or time for reading. For me, the fact that after all these daily tasks they can still take time to attend ABETS classes in the afternoon, shows high levels of commitment. Most women pictured had sun screen on their faces because they were working in the sun. The women end overloaded with manual work because their husbands are migrant workers.

Zibuyile Duma

Ms Duma left school when she was in grade 5. Her home was clean and neat. Her husband is a truck driver who lives in Ixopo and comes home when he is off work. In the home, there were 4 photos of him with the different trucks he drove, and a calendar hanging on the wall.

She uses a pen for homework given by her facilitator at the ABET class. She also teaches her daughter vowels and arithmetic, and helps her with her homework as seen in the picture below. This scan shows how she writes vowels and syllables to teach her daughter. The scan shows a similar practice to that observed by Goldenberg, Rees, and Gallimore (1992, in Benjamin and Lord, 1996) among low-income Hispanic mothers, who emphasise letter naming and spelling sound correspondence when trying to help their children. Duma's session with her daughter during my observation also confirmed Baker, Serpell, Sonnenshein (1995) that when low-income mothers spend time with their children, they are much more likely to emphasise explicit instruction as well as the practice aspects of literacy.

Ms Duma also writes invitations to neighbours, friends and relatives if she has a party at home. Ms Duma developed a love for English in such a way that she practises it by writing to her classmates. She also writes receipts when people buy blocks from the block-making project in which she works.

Ms Duma does not read bedtime stories to her children. However, she tells folk stories to them before going to sleep. The first story is in chapter four. The other story she tells is more of a rhyme.

The second folk story is more of a rhyme. This is how it goes:

The boy went to shoot at the birds. He shot one and gave it to his father to cook and eat it but asked him to keep the liver. His father gave the liver to the boy's mother to eat. The boy came back and asked for his liver. His father told him that it was eaten by his mother, who was given it by his father, who ate his bird, which he shot, from the mountains.

Ms Duma tells the folk stories in the lounge when she and her daughter are sitting at night before going to bed. They all sit on the couch and Ms Duma cuddles the young child in her arms.

The book titled *Umzimba and the crowned cranes* that she was busy reading to herself at the time of interview is based on a traditional folk-tale from Kenya. She summarised the story that it is about one of the greatest chief in Africa, chief Mzimba. It relates Mzimba's experience with a three-year drought, which they had in Kenya. Although she reads books she, does not read to her children at night as a family. She only reads to herself and tells stories to her children.

Ms Duma enjoys reading books written in English and *Learn with Echo* because she wants to learn to speak English fluently and be able to write it. She enjoys Mkhize

Ms Duma enjoys reading books written in English and *Learn with Echo* because she wants to learn to speak English fluently and be able to write it. She enjoys Mkhize and the activities that are in *Learn with Echo*, which she uses to practise her English. The children sometimes read *Learn with Echo* aloud and she corrects them, where necessary.

Her favourite television programme is *Generations*, which she watches with her children. She enjoys it because it helps improve her English, and she also gets the chance of explaining some of the English words to her children when they ask her. She was reading the book titled *Mzimba and the crowned cranes* at the time of interview. I borrowed the book from her and read it. I found her narration of the story to be accurate. I think this means she is benefiting from the class because she told me she could not do this before. She does not have books at home but borrows them from her ABET facilitator. The books are provided by Tembaletu and are loaned to the participants to read at home because they cannot afford to buy books.

Ms Duma's neighbours think she is wasting time. She was not put off by that because she feels she is better off than them as she can now read and understand English better than before. She can now understand the television show *Generations* better than before. She was confident and eloquent during the interview. Ms Duma's answers did not need much probing during the interview. She was able to flow well from one point to the other.



Photograph 4: Duma and her daughter and her baby during homework session

The above photo clearly shows the anxiety of the child and the directive attitude of her mother. They are sitting opposite one another. The child's attitude resembles that of a relationship between a teacher and student where the teacher has authority and ready to scold the child if she says something wrong. The child clearly does not view this session as fun but the one with the possibility of scolding or spanking.

Ntombikhona Mnguni

The volume of the radio was very high when I arrived at Mnguni's house. She told me she enjoys listening to the radio. The volume was high because she was working in another hut. The radio was in the lounge of the main house. Ms Mnguni left school in grade 5. She uses a pen for a variety of reasons. She writes homework from the ABET class and assists her child with her homework, writes short messages to neighbours and friends, and fills inn lotto tickets. She never used a pen for the reasons mentioned above before attending ABET classes. On the question of assisting her children with homework Ms Mnguni said that she never assisted them because of ignorance. She

thought children should be taught by teachers at school. *“Our mothers”* says Mnguni, *“did not help us when we were at school. Now I realise parents were supposed to help me with my homework.”* If she struggles with the children’s homework she asks her ABET teacher for help.

There is no story reading or story telling at night, in this family, but the family reads the Bible together before they go to bed at night. The older daughter reads the scripture aloud. Instead of reading story books to children Ms Mnguni reads them alone and then tells the children what she has read.

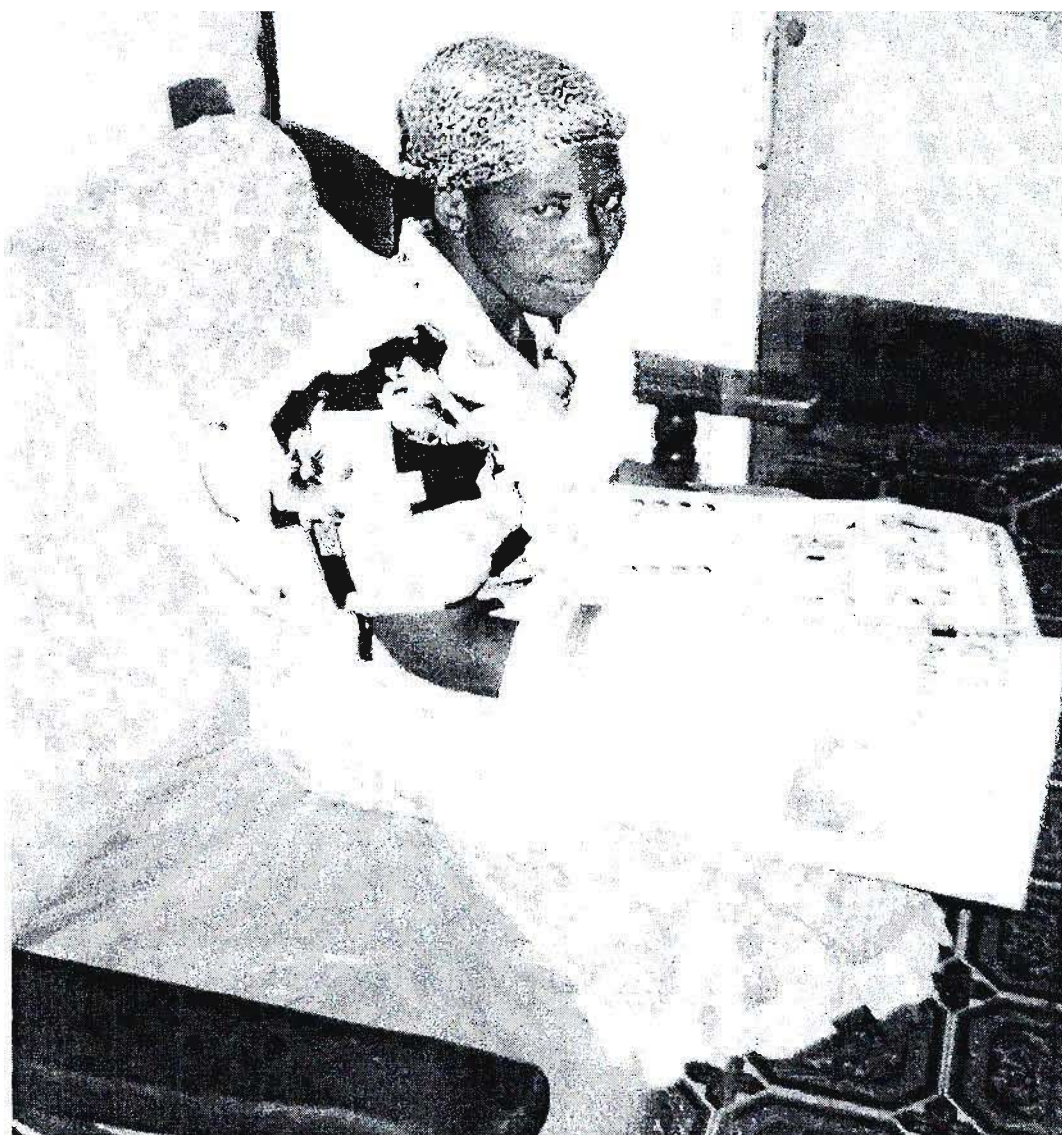


Photo 5: Ms Mnguni reading old copies of Learn with Echo

It is interesting to see how Mnguni keeps copies of *Learn with Echo*. The copies are bound with a brown soft cover. They are well kept and have no sign of dirt or writing on them. The way in which they are kept shows how much she values education in her life. She also had that formal expression (like a teacher in front of learners) when I asked her to demonstrate how she reads them. Reading was very good because she read well with less difficulty in pronunciation.

Ms Mnguni now enjoys her independence in being able to read newspapers such as *The Witness*, *Ilanga*, and magazines such as *Bona*. “*I used to*” attests Mnguni, “*look at pictures in magazines and books but now I am able to read them*”.

She is mostly interested in the English media because they help to improve her English. Mnguni first reads alone and then tells the story to her children. Her husband sometimes asks her about the content of the stories she reads. That challenges her to read carefully and with understanding. Her reading provides her with useful information such as that related to drugs. Such information assists her in teaching her children about the dangers of drug abuse. Mnguni’s favourite television programmes are *Generations* and *Soul City*, which teach about AIDS and HIV. The radio programme she enjoys is *imikhonzo* (greetings) from Radio Maritzburg. She is now able to understand when actors speak English in *Generations*. She does not know what type of newspaper or book is the most popular among people in the community who read.

Ms Mnguni reads and understands her children’s school reports with ease. She keeps records such as letters, identity documents, receipts, and reports on the shelf of wardrobe in her bedroom.

There was a calendar and a poster depicting traditional dressing and customs hanging on the wall. The fridge had a *Learn with Echo* sticker on Mkhize. She likes to read Mkhize’s story from *Learn with Echo*.

Philisiwe Mkhize

Philisiwe Mkhize left school in grade nine. She lives with her mother and her daughter. Although she reached a higher school standard than the rest of the ABET group she could not stop talking about help she gets from the ABET class. The benefits to her are improvement of English (written and spoken), and having access on books (book loans), which she never enjoyed before because there is no library in the community. ABET has instilled a culture of reading in her. She uses a pen to assist her children with homework, especially with learning letters because they are struggling with this. The pen is also used for own ABET homework. Ms Mkhize enjoys poetry to such an extent that she writes it at home during her spare time. ABET did not change anything much regarding her use of the pen, since she used it before for writing poetry, letters to family and friends, invitations and sometimes to help people in the community to write letters. She enjoys writing and has much potential in writing poetry.

Ms Mkhize reported that attending ABET classes improved her reading skills, and she is now reading more books than before. In turn this has helped in improving her English. Maths is the only subject she struggles with. She reads books during the day when all the children are at school. Ms Mkhize tells the children stories that she has read when they come back from school. Some of the books she has read include *Man Must Live*, *Old and New World*. She borrowed the book from the ABET facilitator. *Man Must Live* is about someone who works in a railway station information desk, and provides information to commuters such as boarding time, train delays, and any other information the commuters need to know. *The Old and New World* (book loaned by ABET facilitator) is about ancient life. It talks about the fact that people relied on hunting in order to eat meat, and life has now changed because if people want meat they buy it from butcheries. Because of the shortages of books at home, she reads schoolbooks from her children. One of the books she read from her child's school is *uMaMlambo*. *uMaMlambo* is about a snake which played tricks on people. She reads books in English and isiZulu. Her books are well kept on a shelf in the room divider.

The children read alone during their reading time. They ask her questions when there is something they do not understand. She feels family literacy is very important in the education of her children. Ms Mkhize also thinks she should play a role in the education of her children. Ms Mkhize's favourite radio programmes include *Izinhlelo zabalimi* (agricultural programme), *Amasiko* (culture) and *Umlando* (history). The television programmes enjoyed by Ms Mkhize are *Generations* and *Takalani Sesame*.

Zanele Thabethe

Ms Thabethe left school in grade 5. The picture of a soccer team, Orlando Pirates, is hanging on the wall, with a calendar and a certificate of 20 year-service that was awarded to her husband. She did not know her address. On the other hand, however, she recalled her cellular telephone number with ease.

Her use of a pen includes writing notes to friends, relatives and neighbours, writing letters to her husband, homework, and signing at the bank. She enjoys listening to radio programmes about baking because she gets recipes. She writes down recipes for later reference. Although Thabethe has some schooling she did not have the confidence to sign her name with the pen at the bank but used a thumbprint. She is now able to fill in a bank slip without difficulty. She did not do this on her own before attending ABET. Her level of understanding and speaking English has improved.

She reads books from ABET class. She started that a few days ago, she had been reading about HIV/ AIDS. She reads the books alone and tells her children what she read. Her children benefited from the HIV/ AIDS book she read because it enabled her to teach and advise them about this epidemic. One of the books she was in the process of reading is titled *English at Work*. This is a life skills workbook, which is about using English for employment purposes. It portrays some people at work pondering about the need to learn English in order to understand their boss. The unemployed people on the other hand think they need to learn English in order to get jobs. *English at Work* is an educational book, which teaches people about their rights, conflict management, and so on in the world of work.

Ms Thabethe has children of her own and a granddaughter in the house. Reading books was not her habit until she attended ABET classes. At times, Ms Thabethe reads books with her children and they sometimes ask her about difficult words they do not understand. There was eye contact between her and her granddaughter when she demonstrated how they use books. They were both sitting on the couch in the lounge next to each other. She is tall hence her granddaughter looked up when she looked at her. The granddaughter listened attentively and quietly while the participant read to her. Although there was no laughter, her granddaughter did not seem to be tense. Instead, it seemed there was a lot of intimacy. There was a smile in the child's face at times that seemed to be related to the way her grandmother pronounced words. But what was interesting is that Thabethe's reading was rhythmic. Her face would change if she read a part in the book that suggests the actor was angry. She would have an angry expression on her face. If the mood was happy she would sound happy and even smile. The granddaughter did not ask questions or comment during the reading session. Because of her low level of education, Ms Thabethe can assist only those children who are below grade 5. Those above grade 5 are disadvantaged because she is unable to help. She occasionally reads the Bible. Some of her reading materials include newspapers and *Learn with Echo*. Ms Thabethe thinks the community does not read much.

Her favourite television programmes include *Generations* and news. She enjoys *Generations* because she learns new English vocabulary. She keeps her important documents safely in her wardrobe. Although baking and keeping her baking book was important, she did not know where it was when I asked if I could see it.

numbers, signing notices from her children's school, and writing invitation

Zanele Philippine Mbatha

Ms Mbatha is 40 years old. She has never been to school in her life. Her experience with the use of a pen includes writing homework from ABET class, taking down telephone cards. A radio programme on cooking further boosts her use of a pen at home because she writes recipes, which she keeps. She has now compiled a recipe

book. The recipe book is kept well, just as well as the other records such as guarantee slips from shops. These are kept in the shelf of the wardrobe. She was unable to do the things mentioned above before she attended ABET classes. There is a rich culture of doing homework and learning in her home. She and her 10-year-old son, who is in grade 5, sit together when they do their homework. Each person sits at the table and works individually on their homework. They ask each other for help where they need it.

Ms Mbatha is reading a book titled *English at Work*. She told me what she can remember from her reading. The book starts by helping people prepare for an interview, tells them of consequences of arriving late at work, and explains the rights of workers. There are no other books at home other than the *English at Work* book which she loaned from ABET class teacher. She has access to news papers and *Learn with Echo*, which help to keep the spirit of reading in her.

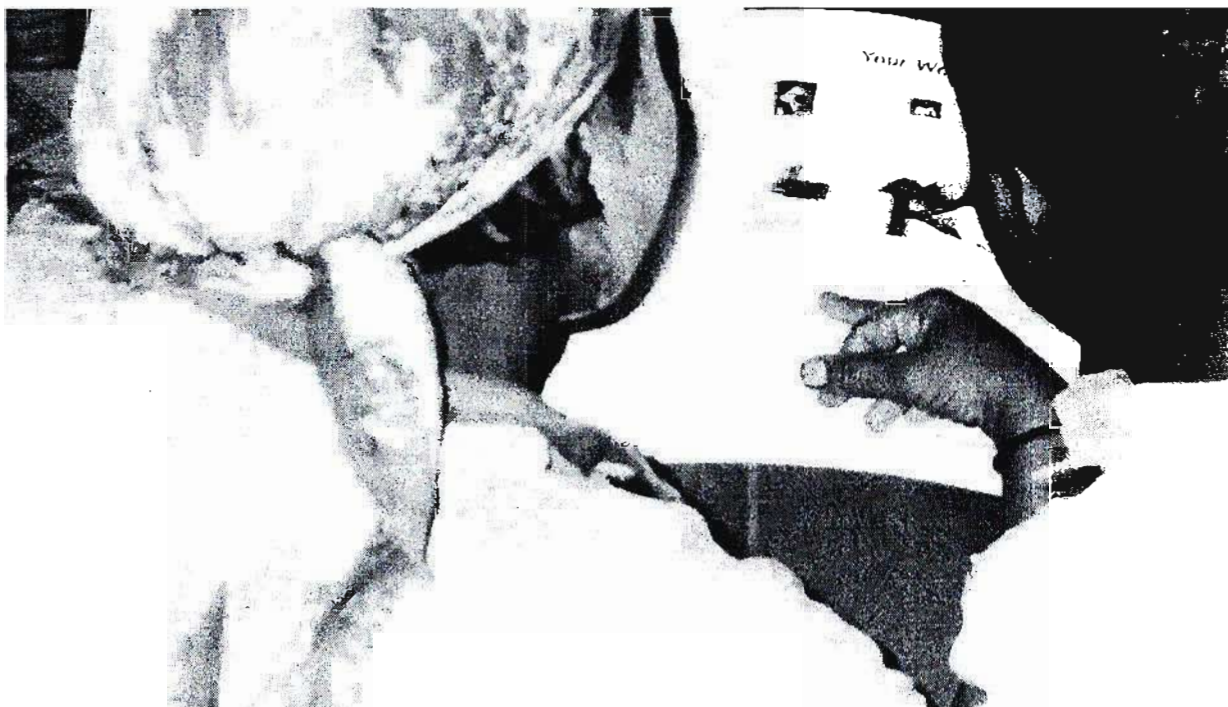


Photo 6: Ms Mnguni reading pointing at the text while reading with her son



Photo 7: Ms Mnguni reading old copies of Learn with Echo

The two photos show Ms Mnguni and her son during their homework session. Ms Mnguni has never been to school. She enjoys reading independently. The son was kneeling besides her while they were doing shared reading. This is not how reading is normally done. Ms Mnguni could not demonstrate sitting on the table because her clothes were soiled as she was working in the garden (that is, why she had her sun screen on her face). They were sitting next to each other, and read the book from the same direction. The middle fingers are used in pointing at the text. This, by no means, was meant to offend the reader. Using them in the Zulu African culture is not meant to insult people unlike other cultures where they mean to insult.

Dumisile Nxele

There are two calendars hanging on the wall at Ms Nxele's house, one for 2003, and she keeps the 2002 calendar as an ornament. The fridge has a Shell V-Power sticker. Ms Nxele is not attending the classes regularly because she is busy with other things. She is 42 years old and has no young children at home. Although she left school in grade 5, her regular use of the pen at home started after attending the ABET class. She uses it to do her homework, write letters to relatives, take down telephone numbers,

and so on. Ms Nxele's son is a grown up, so she does not tell bedtime stories to him. She and her son used to do home work together, but they do not read as a family. She has read a book on HIV/ AIDS titled *Soul City HIV/ AIDS Action Now*. The book covers subjects such as: What is AIDS? How do I find out if I have AIDS? How young people can prevent AIDS, and so on? Her reading the book has helped her in advising and guiding her teenage son to take care of his life and himself. There are other reading materials that she reads such as news papers, and English literacy books. The reading helps to improve her English, reading and writing skills.

Unlike the people interviewed before her, Ms Nxele needed a lot of probing during the interview. It was rather difficult obtaining information from her. She was quiet and answers what is asked. She did not appear to resent my visit. I had to repeat some questions a few times before she understand and answer. I think she might had a personal problem because she was a little bit absent minded during the interview.

Zanele Ngcobo

Zanele Ngcobo is 37; she has never been to school before. Ngcobo was busy with rebuilding her hut, which was collapsing down. She was kind enough to take a break and allow me to interview her in the middle of her building project. She has not attended ABET classes this year because she had a baby, and is busy with a building project at home. When I asked how she uses a pen in her home she was confused. She makes a distinction between a "pen" and a "ball point". The "pen" for her refers to a pencil, and a ball point to any pen that uses ink. We finally clarified those two distinctions, and started on the questionnaire.

She uses a pen to write homework and short messages to neighbours. She never did these things with a pen until she attended ABET classes. She reads books at night. The last book she read was titled *Thobane*. *Thobane* was a little school girl who was friendly with her mom. She used to go to school without shoes. Her mother worked as a domestic worker for the farmer. One day *Thobane* saw thieves stealing at the farm and she chased them away. The farmer came after the thieves had fled away. He thanked *Thobane*, and went away. He later bought her school shoes. He gave them to

her mom. *Thobane's* mom did not show her the shoes until the next morning. When she was dressed up and ready to go to school, her mom came and gave her the shoes and told her it was a gift from the farmer. She got it because she helped chasing away the thieves.

The culture of learning is very vibrant in the home because Ngcobo competes on knowledge English vocabulary with her school going children. They help one another with homework should the need arise. Homework is done individually. She knows her weakness. "*One of my weaknesses*" says Ngcobo, "*is getting the spelling right*". Her children help her a lot with spelling. She takes her education very seriously and takes pride in it. "*I am 37 years old*" Ngcobo maintains, "*because I was born on 18 September 1966, now I can sign my name*". She told me that English is the most spoken language. She maintained that doctors who do not know or understand isiZulu used to find it hard to treat her, if there was no interpreter. Now she can at least explain what is wrong with her. She can also count money. *Learn with Echo* (especially Mkhize's story), and *Ilanga*, are in her list of reading materials. She said she does not read very much for pleasure. She does not listen to the radio often except for the stories.

Her correspondence and important records are kept in the cabinet. She was very confident and proud of what the ABET course did for her. She has a potential of recruiting more students for the course because of the way she talks about it. One of the pieces of evidence of her learning is her signature shown on the picture below

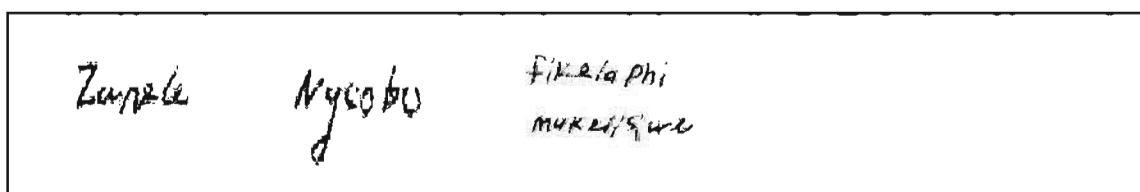


Illustration 2: The evidence of learning is in application!

It was quit difficult for Ms Ngcobo to write her name. It seemed a combination of hard work and being unsure of what she was writing. However, she felt very proud

after writing it. There was a sense of accomplishment. She previously used a thumb print when signing.



Photo 8: Ms Ngcobo after demonstration how she signs her name

Nomusa Mchunu

Nomusa Mchunu is a 29 year old mother of 3 children. The last grade she attended was grade 5. The use of pen and paper in her home includes writing letters to relatives, friends, writing minutes for her church, measurements of her customers (she is a dressmaker) and homework. She did not use pen for the above-mentioned functions before attending ABET classes. She used to rely very much on her memory because she never wrote anything down.

She reads *English at Work*, a work book which is about the use of *English at work*, *Your Work* which is about the use of machinery at work. Sabelo's story stood out for her from the *English at Work* book. Sabelo and his colleague were working on a Steel girder on a construction site. His spanner fell off. He tried to catch it and fell down. He fractured his leg. His friend Zac tried to help him. Mchunu enjoys reading English literature because it helps improve her English vocabulary. Her use of books and pen

at home has improved. She said that she used to depend on her children to write everything that needed to be written. She maintains that she is now independent. Her enthusiasm and benefit she gets from ABET classes has led her to believe that everyone should attend the classes.

Ms Mchunu also enjoys listening to the radio. She enjoys health shows such as Doctor Ramatisela's show from Ukhozi FM. The programme helped her with a medical problem which she referred as "women's problem" she had some time ago. She got the solution through listening to the radio. She finds it easier talking to the doctor about her problems now than before. She maintains that she does not trust translation but prefers speaking to doctors directly.

She thinks that the most read book in her community is the Bible. The Bible is read occasionally at her home at night, and she sings from her hymn book during the evening prayers at home. All her records are kept in a file, which is kept in a dressing table in her bedroom.

Her wish is to see more people attending ABET classes since the rate of illiteracy is high in kwaQanda. She said that if she could get into people's hearts she would recruit and tell them how it helped her with vocabulary and other needs. Most people feel she is wasting time because she will not get any employment after she completes her classes.

Zandile Prisca Ndlovu

Zandile left school in grade 1. Her use for a pen is very limited because she uses it only for her homework. On the other hand, she enjoys reading *Learn with Echo*, and books from ABET classes. For her *Learn with Echo* is a very educational and informative material. Some of the things she learnt that she can remember are special events like June 16, crime status in the midlands such as Dambuza, and rural development. She ensures that she does not go to bed without reading. She is now reading English with understanding. The evidence of this is that she made her own dictionary from a 72-page jotter book in which she has written English words and

their meanings. She is now in the middle of her second dictionary. Her dictionary is a well used book. Below is an example of a page of this dictionary.

She has also benefited a lot from reading *Soul City* book which she got from ABET teacher. *Soul City* is about AIDS education. Among other reading materials she reads *Ilanga* and any news paper she comes across.

The radio programmes she listens to are programmes that have to do with Christianity. She only listens to radio Maritzburg. Most neighbours criticise her for attending classes. One of them said "Ufundela ukufa"- you are learning for your death. This means she is too old to learn anything because it won't help her, she is about to die. Some of the members of the community encourage her. They think her effort is great. She regrets that some women are busy with home chores to such an extent that they are not able to attend ABET classes. She is now confident that she knows her rights as a woman. All her correspondence and important documents are kept in the wardrobe.

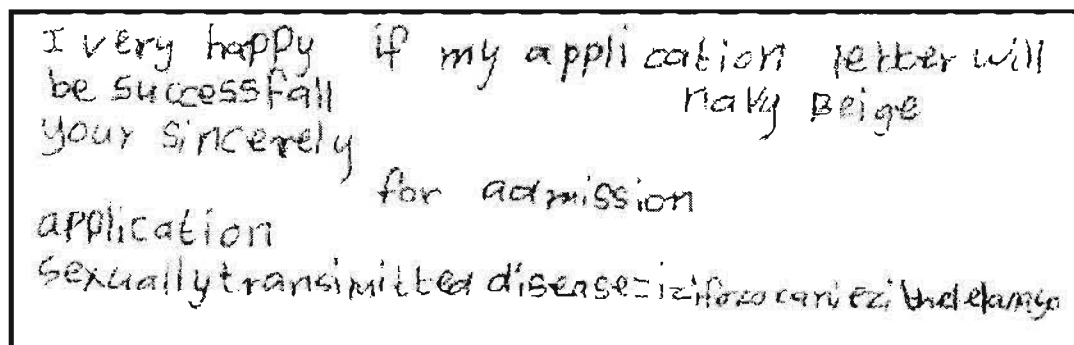


Illustration 3: sample page of Ms Ndlovu's dictionary

The scan above suggests that Ms Ndlovu views her education as a door to employment. The top paragraph seems to be a combination of the conclusion and the title (application for admission) of an application letter. It is interesting that she wrote the colour *navy beige* in the middle of the terms for letter writing. The scan also bears evidence that she has been reading about HIV/ AIDS.

She has evidently taken keen interest in understanding terms such as sexually transmitted diseases. There is even a Zulu explanation to the term, which suggests that she takes HIV/ AIDS understanding seriously. There are, however, spelling mistakes or grammar mistakes in her dictionary. For example she wrote: *I very happy if my application letter will be successful* instead of *I am very happy if my application letter is successful*. Spelling error is on the Zulu translation where she wrote: *sexually transmitted disease = izifo zocani ezithelelanayo*. Instead of *sexually transmitted disease = izifo zocansi ezithelelanayo*.

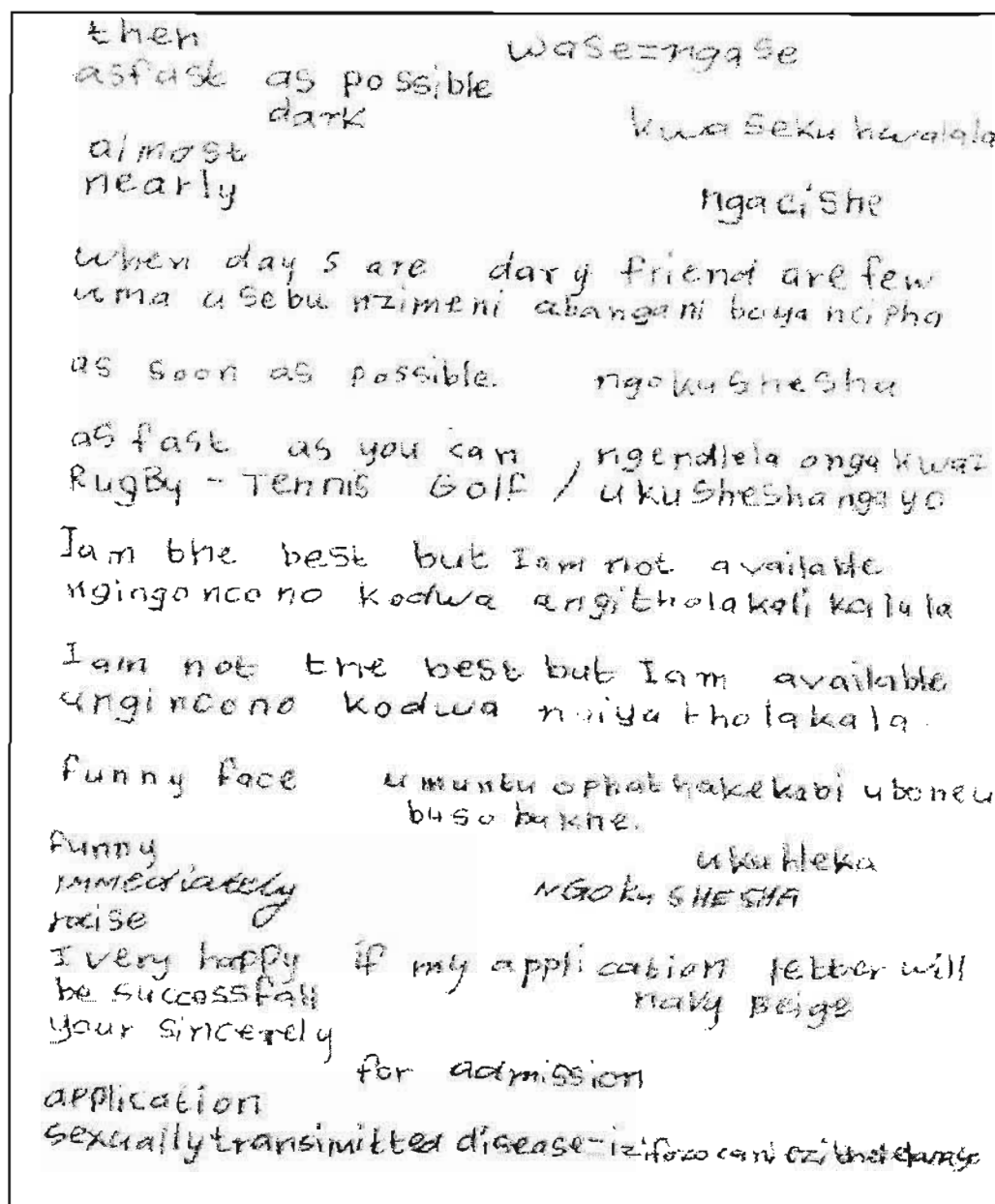


Illustration 4: Sample page of Ms Ndlovu's dictionary

Ms Ndlovu selected odd phrases or sentences for which she had written translations. This is interesting processing because some of these terms are intriguing but difficult to suggest why she wrote them. For example, the term she wrote: *when days are dary friend are few* could mean that she was thinking of her favourite song sung by the late renowned smooth jazz artist Siphso Gumede who lived in Durban. Some words are miss-spelt, for example: *when days are dary friend are few* instead of *when days are dark friends are few*. There are some Zulu terms which have spelling errors, for example, *I am the best but I am not available = ngingoncono kodwa angitholakali kalula* it should read like this: *ngingongcono kodwa angitholakali kalula*. The extent to which she takes her work seriously is commendable despite mistakes she made, especially since she left school in grade one.

John Velasingazi Nzuke

It was a hot day when I interviewed Nzuke. We met in friend's house where he had been drinking. Most men are unemployed in the area. Hence, they pass time by drinking once they complete their chores. Some of them were building houses, looking after cows and repairing cars. Although Nzuke was drinking with his friends, he kindly accepted my request to interview him at his home. We went to his home, which was approximately three minutes away.

Nzuke and his wife had a new born child in the family. His wife was at home looking after the baby and doing her daily chores. I came just after she put the newborn baby to sleep.

Nzuke is the only man that I interviewed who attends ABET classes. He is 34 years old and is married with children. Although he left school in grade 7, he did not know his address. I am not sure of this but it seemed as if he had taken a few drinks when I met him. He told me that he seldomly uses pen at home. He uses it mainly for signing school indemnity forms; ABET homework, and message books from school. When I asked him if he helps his children with school homework he, informed me that he does not help them, but his wife does. His wife is doing level 3 English, IsiZulu and

Maths at Qanda ABET programme. I then asked to speak to his wife who yielded the following information.

His wife tells bed time stories to their children at night. One of the stories is about a Cannibal, which used to hunt and eat at people who lived in the vicinity of his cave.

Ms Nzuke was studying *English work* book on the use of present tense. She understands present tense as what is currently being said. Her readings include *Echo*, *Isolezwe* and ABET books. She believes that reading helped in improving her English. Some neighbours think she wastes time by attending ABET classes. Others think she has taken a worth while decision.

Nzuke enjoys listening to political news programme *Abasiki bebunda* from Ukhozi Fm.

APPENDIX THREE: ACCOUNTS OF FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW

Passing on of cultural wisdom

The data from focus group interviews are presented according to the various interview questions participants comment on how they passed cultural values on to their children.

The mothers call the children and sit together and the mothers talk to them about a particular topic, e.g. respect, girl's self discipline and so on.

One of the ladies said:

"I told my daughters not to allow men to touch them anyhow. I also teach them about menstruation and demonstrate how to use the sanitary pads correctly".

The discussions are sometimes initiated by children when they ask mothers questions about particular aspects of life.

One of the old traditions of virginity testing is still being spoken of in some homes at Qanda: A respondent said:

"I teach and encourage the preservation of virginity at home. I tell my daughters that they must not have sex with anyone. I tell them that they must not give inkomo kamama ayifunayo"

This means, literally that the cow that the mother wants. This implies that when lobolo is being negotiated the mother will be compensated for caring her for nine months. The girl's mother in the Zulu tradition is usually compensated when lobolo is negotiated if the girl is a virgin. If she is not a virgin, the first guy who had sex with her is *fined* when she falls pregnant. This is done by giving the girl's mother a cow because she will not get a cow when lobolo for her daughter is negotiated. She says

that when there is a lot of sex on the television she switches it off. Some mothers said they do not switch it off because their children know about it from schools and peers. Some said the sex scenes from television series provide them with the opportunity to talk to their children.

There is an African saying that goes, “it takes a village to educate a child”. This is still practised at kwaQanda. All the mothers felt that as mothers they should help their children with homework. If they are unable to help they must ask neighbours to help. Mothers praised the ABET programme because when children needed help before they joined the programme, they were helpless because they did not have a clue on most things. Mothers encourage their children to read, and some go to the extent of ensuring that their children read before going to bed.

The participants discussed the various literacy practices in the home. Although reading is encouraged at home, it is not always easy because poverty has prevented mothers from buying books for their children to read. The most common book in homes is the Bible. The women that attend ABET classes get the benefit of using the books that are loaned to them by the ABET teacher. Some of the reading materials that are easily accessible are *Learn with Echo*, school books, letters from their husbands, and other family members, insurance policy documents, correspondence between their husbands and companies where they have insurance policies and letters from schools.

They have cited a problem with *Learn with Echo*:

“some shop keepers use the copies left at their shops for distribution to their community to wrap goods”

People enjoy reading Mkhize’s story from *Learn with Echo*.

Participants reported that:

“I can read short messages from school, school reports, road signs and the names of the shops”.

“I am pleased that I can not get lost anymore even though the signs and street addresses of the shops were clearly visible.”

ABET classes helped me to improve English. This makes it easier for me to find jobs. When I am employed as a domestic worker, I would be able to read messages left for me by my employer”.

Participant’s comments on the use of pen include:

“I write short messages to my neighbours ”

“I write messages to invite my neighbours and friends to umemulo (21st birthday) or umsebenzi (traditional ceremony where a cow is slaughtered for ancestral veneration), and when negotiations for lobola are underway”. (only some family members and in some cases very close friends are invited).

“I write letters to my husband who is a migrant labourer”.

“I write short messages to teachers excusing the child being absent from school.”

One participant commented:

My son writes lyrics for English music such as Brandy’s music. The title of the songs he writes include Full Moon, Come Closer, and so on.

There was only one participant who said::

“I write invoices for the customers who buy blocks from our block making project.”

The other activity related to writing is drawing. Some mothers said that their children draw greetings cards, pictures of their homes, people such as a woman working in the

garden, the bricklayer building a house, and soccer stars such as Dr. Khumalo and Nomvete, cars, local schools. I observed a lot of writing on these drawings because they label the drawings.

APPENDIX FOUR: PERSONAL WRITING

Introduction

Participants were requested to write their own personal experience of ABET in whatever aspect they would like to write on. This part of research was voluntary hence the responses were few and varied in length. Mr Joseph Thabethe did not participate in the individual interviews because only women were selected in the study. His input was invaluable for the purpose of this study. It is for this reason that I have included it in this section. The other reason is that he volunteered to write it. The participants wrote about these experiences in isiZulu and at their own leisure. I collected them much later after the individual and focus groups had been conducted. These personal encounters bear testimony to the fact that the women are learning a great deal from ABET classes. ABET classes helped to eliminate serious problems such as being able to identify a newborn baby thorough name tag as in the case of Mrs Zandile Ndlovu. It has also helped in boosting the self-image of the women as well.

Joseph Thabethe

“I am so pleased that I am part of the ABET class. My life has changed a lot because I am now able to read, check and monitor the children’s homework books from school. The ABET class has helped me in advising community members about the importance of education. My desire is to see everyone attending ABET classes in the community and becoming professionals in different fields.”

“The work of pen in my life is to write the assignments for the ABET classes. My dream is to have five degrees and to become a doctor. I am now able to read letters and books, and can fill in forms at work.”

Ntombikhona Mnguni

“The classes helped me a lot in life and in my family. I can now read and write, fill in bank forms, and to help my children with homework when they need help. I am also helping my children with homework when they ask me for help. My community is also appreciating the help it gets through my attending the ABET classes. I interpret if a non-Zulu speaking person is addressing them. The community is encouraging me to learn.”

Zandile Prisca Ndlovu

“ABET class has done a lot of good things for me because I could not read or write. I am now free because I can read and write. I can read the Bible, the prices at the shop, count money, and read the destination of the busses that I board when travelling. Education has taken away my ignorance and the people who looked down upon me give me a lot of respect. My attendance has also improved my image at home because my husband used to tease me by saying that he does not speak to an uneducated person but now he does not tease me because he asks me most things that have to do with life”.

“I am now able to help my children with homework. I can now read what is written on the television screen and understand English when I am watching it. Attending ABET has helped me because I could not read my child’s name during feeding or nappy change when I went for delivery. I can read street names and when people ask me things I am able to talk and respond with confidence. ABET has helped me a great deal in life because I am no longer ignorant.”

“There are lot of things that one could do with the pen. I did not use the pen much before I attended the ABET class because I left school before I started writing. Now that I know to write I have a problem if I do not have a pen at home or with me. The pen helps you wherever you are especially when you exchange addresses, telephone numbers, and taking contact and other details from the television, if there is a need.”

Zibuyile Duma

“I took the best decision when I decided to be a mother and an adult learner at the ABET class because it helped me a great deal. I forgot most of the things I learnt when I was young because I left school in grade 5. I was a real beginner when I started ABET because of not reading and writing for a long time.”

“My participation in ABET class has also given me other skills which I did not have before. These include things like neatly packing the books, taking care of my child’s clinic card, reading skills, reading and understanding English. Before I started ABET classes, it took me a long time to read one English word. My skills in speaking, reading and understanding English have improved a lot. Although my proficiency to English language has improved, I still need to learn more so that I can improve and be able to read a whole book and understand it with less or no difficulty. I used to ask neighbours or my children to read letters and other materials for me. But now I am independent and able to assist my children with homework where possible.”

“Travel and shopping was a nightmare for me because I used to get lost when looking for a particular shop for the first time because I could not read or write. Another problem presented itself when I found the shop because most sales people could not speak isiZulu. Conversing with them was difficult because I could not speak English and they could not speak isiZulu. Taking a bus to Pietermaritzburg was also difficult because I could not read the destination board. I once took a bus that was going to a different place because I could not read the destination board. But now I can help people who can not read or write and read for them where the bus is going to. Because of the benefits and independence I gained through attending ABET class; I encourage people to join the class so that they can also be assisted in the process.”

“Banking also presented me with a problem because I could not fill in banking forms. I used to ask the security guard for assistance. The security guard would sometimes be rude and I used to put up with whatever they said because I needed their help. I had a

lot of problems when the automatic teller machine system was introduced because I used to waste a lot of time at the machine as I struggled to use it. But now I do not have problems with using the machine because the facilitator taught me how to do it.”