

**THE READING WORLD OF BLACK
PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHERS IN RURAL
KWAZULU NATAL**

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ABSTRACT

An investigation into the extent to which rural black primary school teachers of English in KwaZulu-Natal have been exposed to a culture of reading in general and, more particularly, their perceptions of the value of proficiency in reading English.

In this study I set out to explore the reading attitudes and practices of underqualified teachers of English studying for their Teacher's Diploma, as well as the broad context within which these were acquired. I also wished to examine whether teachers from remote rural areas where little English is spoken, perceive proficiency in reading English as providing access to social and economic progress, power and prestige. These two issues are interconnected for this study because as teachers of English and reading, their reading attitudes and practices will impact on their learners at a formative stage in their education.

The data for this study were obtained by means of questionnaires and reading histories which investigated the above two issues. Respondents completed questionnaires giving details of their early experiences of reading. In this first part of the study which explored the exposure to a culture of reading, the language of reading is not specified. The questionnaire also dealt with adult reading attitudes and practices and here respondents were given the opportunity to make a distinction between their main language and English. This part of the study related to attitudes to reading in general, as well as

perceptions of the value of proficiency in reading English. Questionnaire data were amplified by extended reading histories.

It was found that respondents had had little exposure to a reading culture either at school or at home. Harsh teaching methods had militated against the development of a practice of reading for pleasure. Respondents therefore did not place a high value on reading, either in their personal or their professional lives. In addition, respondents generally did not perceive proficiency in reading English as conferring social or economic benefits. It is assumed that because respondents live and work in remote, linguistically homogeneous areas of KwaZulu-Natal where little English is spoken, they do not see a dynamic connection between English competence and improved job prospects and social status in their everyday lives.

The tentative conclusion which is confirmed by other research in this field is that respondents would benefit from an intervention which would engender a sense of reading as connecting with their existing lives and affording access to the national and global world. Expanding the notion of reading to incorporate a critical literacy approach and extending the notion of text to include those drawn from popular culture might encourage a closer sense of engagement with written texts. Respondents could thus be empowered to become teachers of reading and English able to equip their learners to deal with the demands of the modern world.

INTRODUCTION

This study grew out of a six-year involvement in the upgrading of rural black primary¹ school teachers in KwaZulu -Natal. It has been guided by a belief that there is a need to examine what lies behind the difficulty experienced by my students in coping with the demands of reading in English at a tertiary educational level and their apparent lack of enthusiasm for reading in any language as a leisure-time pursuit.

The purpose of this study is twofold: firstly, to investigate the reading practices and attitudes of my students and the broad context within which these were acquired; and, secondly, to study the extent to which proficiency in English is perceived to afford access to improved employment prospects and status in the community.

The two key issues in this research are therefore the extent to which these primary school teachers embrace a culture of reading and their perception of the gatekeeping role of English within the global community (Pennycook 1994). I consider these questions to have serious implications for their future teaching practices. As teachers in the phase, they are responsible for teaching reading and English. The methodology they employ and the attitudes

¹ The terms "primary", "primary school" and "primary phase" were formerly used to demote the first seven years of schooling.

they model (Bailey 1996:25) will play a critical role in shaping the competence and attitudes of their learners.

It should be noted that the question of language is dealt with in two different ways in this research, in keeping with the two purposes outlined above. In researching the existence of a culture of reading among my students both as children and adults, no distinction has been made between reading in their main language (Reed 1999:43) and in English. I have followed French (1988) and Jackson and Thomson (1997) in adopting a practice of studying reading attitudes and practices holistically. However, English has obviously been singled out in those parts of the study which relate perceptions of the role of English in the modern world.

Literacy acquisition, whether in a main or an additional language, is not the focus of this research. I have explored certain clearly stipulated aspects of my students' early reading experiences (see Appendices 1 – 3) with the particular aim of relating these experiences to their adult reading attitudes and practices. An investigation of the process whereby my students became literate in several languages is beyond the scope of what I have attempted.

This research operated within the paradigm of the reflective practitioner (Baird 1992; Killen 1996; Freeman 1996; Jackson and Thomson 1997; Jackson and Stielau 1998). This paradigm is discussed in more detail in the brief literature review below. My intention in carrying out this research is that the insights it affords me will enable me to improve my practice in teacher education.

DESCRIPTION OF THE CONTEXT

During the apartheid era teacher education was conducted on a racially segregated basis. With the introduction of the Bantu Education Act of 1953, black² teacher education was taken over by the central government (Behr:1988). For the first thirty years of the Bantu Education system two courses were offered for black primary school teachers: the Lower Primary Teachers' Certificate (a two-year course after Std 6, for women only) and the Primary Teachers' Certificate (a two-year course after Std 8) (Behr 1988:169). However, the level of qualification was gradually raised and by 1982 the increase in the number of black people with a Senior Certificate had "made it possible to phase out all courses with an entrance requirement below Std 10" (Behr 1988:171). Nevertheless, the need for professional qualifications had not been addressed.

The Minister of Education responsible for Black education stated (in 1986) that more than 90% of Black teachers in South Africa did not have what he regarded as the minimum qualification, i.e. a three-year post-Senior Certificate. His Department had set itself the task of upgrading the qualifications of teachers in service and training an additional 69 000 teachers by the turn of the century. (Behr 1988:177)

² Behr (1988) uses the term "black" to refer to African people.

If the Minister's statement relates to the national situation, it must be noted that KwaZulu-Natal has a particular serious problem with inadequately qualified teachers. The then acting chief director of education in KwaZulu-Natal, Simon Mbokazi, acknowledged this when commenting on the enrolment of 8 000 in-service teachers with the South African College of Open Learning in May 1999:

[T]he department was aware that a further 26 000 of the 77 000 in the province did not have the minimum M+3 qualification. (The Daily News: 14 May 1999)

The institution at which I work, Promat College, was established in 1985, initially as a matriculation college focusing on teachers without a matriculation certificate. In 1994 Promat College of Education (In-Service) was opened with the purpose of extending the upgrading programme for in-service teachers by offering a Teachers' Diploma in the Senior Primary Phase to under- and unqualified teachers. The programme is offered on a full-time and a part-time basis, the latter through a distance education mode. In KwaZulu-Natal the full-time campus is situated in Pinetown and has an enrolment of 350 students. Part-time tuition is provided at the Pinetown campus for 500 students, as well as at two satellite campuses in Jozini in northern KwaZulu-Natal and Kokstad in south-western KwaZulu-Natal where the enrolment is 450 and 120 respectively. Promat College of Education also has campuses in Mamelodi and Soshanguve in Gauteng. Since 1999 Further Diplomas in Education in English, Mathematics and Science respectively, have also been offered.

As a non-governmental organisation, Promat College receives no state subsidy and relies entirely on student fees and donor funding. With the decline in the latter source of funding, full-time fees have increased to the point where they are beyond the reach of many students. The full-time college will, therefore, close by the year 2000 as the demand for full-time study continues to decline. However, part-time study is gaining in popularity because it is more affordable and does not mean resigning a teaching post without the reassurance of future job prospects. The fact that students will be studying part-time has implications that relate directly to this research. Although course materials are supported by four week-long contact sessions a year, studying part time inevitably involves a greater reliance on the written word and reading skills. A successful student will need to be a proficient reader of English as this is the medium of instruction and, generally, the language of higher education.

Most Promat students come from remote areas of KwaZulu-Natal where Zulu is the lingua franca of everyday life. According to anecdotal evidence, students hear very little English spoken around them and seldom speak it themselves in either their personal or their professional lives. Opportunities for reading texts in English are also very limited due to geographical isolation and rural impoverishment.

BRIEF LITERATURE REVIEW

The idea for this research was generated by French's study of the meaning and role of reading in the lives of urban black factory workers in Gauteng, South Africa(1988). French found that although the early reading experiences and practices of these workers were very limited and their current practices mainly confined to newspaper reading, they placed a high value on reading:

Reading is understood in terms of aspirations to modernity and to being at home in a national and cosmopolitan community. The experience of reading is felt to be vitally important, although it is not a major feature in the lives of most of the participants in the study. (French 1988 : v)

French's participants were drawn from a wide range of backgrounds and ages. What they had in common at the time of the study was that they were township dwellers and factory workers who saw themselves as cosmopolitan despite their heterogeneous cultural background.

The participants in the present study differ markedly from French's participants though they share a common language, culture, rural background, educational level and career. As will be seen below they differ markedly in that they assign a low value to reading despite the fact they, as teachers, would be expected to have a vested interest in reading for professional reasons and to value it highly in their personal and community lives.

Influenced by French, the present study has focused on reading rather than literacy. French accounts for his choice of focus thus:

Although reading itself is a very broad subject, it has some precision compared with literacy...[which] has become something of an emotive term. (18)

Reading is seen from a holistic perspective as the making of meaning from a text. It has been defined as follows:

Readers use their knowledge of the world and the structures and patterns of language to interact with the print, and with all these cues and frameworks of knowledge and values, the reader constructs meaning. Reading is not a passive act of receiving meaning, in the sense that if it is decoded correctly the correct meaning will arrive in our heads. Reading involves active processes of meaning making.
(Education Department, South Australia 1987:91)

The question of the language of the text being read is dealt with below in the discussion of the research methodology.

The present study is informed by literature that considers reading as both of personal value and as essential to engaging in the world of the late twentieth century. Baynham (1995: 186) views reading as a socially situated practice which –

involves a shift away from what reading is towards what reading does, from objectifying reading (Heap 1991), to looking at the settings and

contexts in which reading occurs, what counts as reading , who does it and what reading does.

Commenting on the value of reading in teacher education as a means of multi-cultural self-development, Stover (1988) characterizes reading as "a way to enlarge one's vision of the world, of possible selves, of others". Thus reading involves mediation between oneself and the outside world.

A consideration of reading specifically in English gives rise to different questions: those relating to the hegemonic role of English as the language of power, both in South Africa and globally. Locally, Neville Alexander (1996) stresses the central role of English in educational language policy:

We need to accept the hegemony and usefulness of English as an international language, and therefore that access to English has to be facilitated for all learners in this country. (28)

Writing from an international perspective Pennycook (1994), who is considering the cultural politics of the post-colonial era, highlights the role of English as a global language which acts as a gatekeeper in affording access to social and economic progress, power and prestige. Conversely, the lack of proficiency in English condemns one to operating within very narrow social, professional and economic constraints.

It is my contention that the legacy of deliberate educational deprivation under Bantu Education and the racially based isolation of the apartheid years have left the students at Promat College with a severely deficient competence in

English. As long as they remain in the geographically remote areas of KwaZulu-Natal where the lingua franca is Zulu, they will not be immediately disadvantaged as a result of their lack of proficiency in English but this linguistic confinement merely perpetuates the drawbacks of apartheid in isolating one community from another and from access to the wider world. It is important that they, as teachers, do not perpetuate this insularity.

Of significance here is the concept coined by teacher educator Lortie in 1975 of the “apprenticeship of observation” which refers to the fact that “teachers acquire seemingly indelible imprints from their own experience as students and these are tremendously difficult to shake” (Kennedy 1990:17). This concept relates to this study in three ways. Firstly, it proposes the need to understand what formed this apprenticeship. Secondly, it acknowledges the difficulty of changing the already existing practices of teachers through in-service teacher education. Thirdly, it underlines how powerful a role model the teacher is in influencing learners’ behaviour.

If, as Kennedy (1991:16) suggests, “the power of the conventional images of teaching that derive from childhood experiences makes it very difficult to alter teaching practices”, then the need to intervene in this perpetuated cycle is all the greater, bearing in mind the conditions of deprivation in which the teacher students were educated. This study therefore seeks to investigate the early reading experiences of the respondents and to make connections with their current reading practices and attitudes. Its purpose is to create an awareness of the reading attitudes of rural black teachers in KwaZulu-Natal because, in

the words of Larsen-Freeman (1983), “the first step towards changing our teaching practices is awareness. Such awareness may encompass what we currently do, the factors that have shaped us and our options for change” (Freeman 1996:26).

This study operated within the paradigm of the reflective practitioner (Baird 1992; Killen 1996; Freeman 1996; Jackson and Thomson 1997; Jackson and Stielau 1998). This paradigm emerged from the liberatory view of education in which

education is seen fundamentally as an agent of social change [and in which teachers are] conceptualized as innovative professionals who, at any one moment of classroom action, will be engaged in the simultaneous evaluation and reconciliation of an inordinately large number of competing variables, drawing on processes which are not reducible to a set of specific identifiable technical skills. (Gilbert 1994: 514)

This paradigm acknowledges that teachers perceive the situations in which they work by means of the frame (Schon 1983, 1987) of a set of expectations, based on knowledge, values and beliefs. By reflecting critically on his or her own experience in the classroom –

teachers discover that their existing frame for understanding what happens in their classes is only one of several possible [frames]. (Barnes 1992: 17)

Reflection on one's own practice as a teacher is intended to produce the following result:

[Teachers'] meanings, perceptions and beliefs are continually reviewed and revised to match professional knowledge and know-how. (Yaxley 1993: 27)

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study operated within the hermeneutic research paradigm (Freeman 1996:360), focusing on "on what people think and how they understand the world in which they live and act" (360) and thus constitutes second order research in that it involves "the participants' perceptions of phenomena in the world" (366).

The research was conducted in two phases. Firstly, a broad-based questionnaire on early reading experiences, as well as current reading practices and attitudes, was administered to a sample of 42 in-service teacher students. In the second phase the respondents were asked to compile their own reading histories. The research process was iterative (Freeman 1996: 371) in that the information from the reading histories was used to verify and extend the *a priori* data obtained from the questionnaire.

With regard to the language of reading, the present study has followed French (1988) and Jackson and Thomson (1997) in not asking respondents to distinguish between their main language (Reed 1999:43) and English in their answers to the section of the questionnaire relating to their early experiences of reading. The purpose of this section is to establish to what extent respondents were exposed to a culture of reading (in any language) in their homes and schools. This section is intended to address the first purpose of this study.

Significantly, even in writing their reading histories, none of the respondents makes a distinction between their main language and English when discussing early reading experiences, despite the fact that the guiding questions (Appendix 3) invite them to do so.

In the third section of the questionnaire, which studies the respondents' reading attitudes as adults, they are given a choice of statements which includes the opportunity to single out reading in English, as distinct from reading in an unspecified language. These statements in this section relate to the second purpose of this study, namely to establish to what extent respondents perceive proficiency in English as affording access to improved job prospects and status in the community.

The use of reading histories is in keeping with the growing trend towards the study of narrative internationally (Perl 1994, Beattie 1995, Constans 1997 and Melnick 1997) and follows Jackson and Stielau (1997) and Jackson and

Thomson (1997) who used narrative tasks (literate life histories) in teacher education at B. Ed. level in South Africa in order to study the effects of the apprenticeship of observation. In the United States of America Wagner, Brock and Agnew (1994) also discuss the value in pre-service teacher education of student portfolios involving descriptions of early memories of learning to read.

The questionnaire was administered by myself as researcher to a class of 42 full-time students during an hour-long teaching period. It was emphasised that participation did not form part of the academic assessment process and was entirely voluntary. After the purpose of the research had been explained to them, all 42 members of the group were eager to participate. My presence as administrator made it possible to ensure that all respondents understood the questions. Some clarification was required. It was stressed that frank answers were necessary in order to derive useful conclusions from the study. The fact that this particular group of students had been taught by me for two years and that we had established an atmosphere of mutual trust was important for the validity of the questionnaire data.

Two weeks after the administration of the questionnaire, the respondents were asked to write their reading histories during the October College vacation. Again, participation in this second phase of the study was voluntary. Only two of the original group of 42 did not submit their reading histories at the beginning of the next term.

The reading histories were intended to afford respondents a vehicle which permitted a less structured range of responses than the questionnaire. A personal letter was addressed to each respondent (see appendix 2) to inform him/her of the purpose of the reading histories and to reassure them that what was required was an honest rather than a grammatically correct response. Guiding questions (see appendix 3) were also provided, although it was stressed that these were intended merely as a starting point for the respondent to discuss what was of personal relevance.

The respondents were all full-time students in their second year of study at the Pinetown campus of Promat College who had chosen to specialise in English as a major subject. A biographical profile of the respondents, as obtained from the questionnaire data, is set out in detail below.

FINDINGS

The findings below are based on the answers given to the questionnaire which was administered to 42 respondents. A copy of the questionnaire is attached as appendix 1. The questionnaire consisted of four sections. The first section was intended to establish a biographical profile of the group. The second section studied the respondents' early experiences with text, both before going to school and later while progressing through the school system. The third section explored the respondents' adult reading attitudes and the fourth their current reading practices.

The findings of the questionnaire are discussed sequentially in the order in which the questions appear in the questionnaire. Where appropriate, these findings are amplified by reference to the reading histories compiled by the same respondents. Although respondents were not asked in the questionnaire to state their qualifications or gender, the following additional information is provided in order to give a clearer picture of the group studied:

Gender Distribution of Group

The gender distribution of the group is as follows:

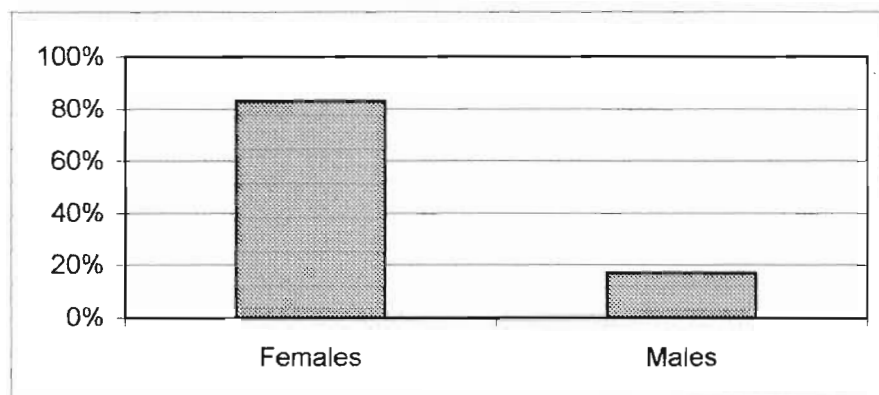


Figure 1: Gender Distribution

The predominance of women (83%) is in keeping with the historical positioning of women in the teaching profession³. The sexist and racist ideology behind this predominance was articulated in Hendrik Verwoerd's introduction to the Bantu Education Act in 1954:

As a woman is by nature so much better fitted for handling young

³ According to the Report of the Gender Equity Task Team on Gender Equity in Education. In 1997 73% of teachers in primary schools were women. (1997: 82)

children, and as the great majority of Bantu children are to be found in the lower classes of primary school, it follows that there should be far more female than male teachers. The department will therefore... declare the assistant posts in primary schools to be female teachers' posts.... Quotas will be laid down at training schools as regards numbers of males [sic] and female candidates respectively which may be allowed to enter for the courses ... this measure will, in the course of time, bring about a considerable saving of funds which can be devoted to ... more children at school ... (Truscott 1994 : 22).

Qualifications of Group Studied

The respondents had no professional qualifications, other than a matriculation certificate. Three respondents, one of whom had the longest teaching experience (13 years), had passed the matriculation examination within the past four years. Teachers seeking to upgrade their qualifications at Promat College are sometimes in possession of a Primary Teacher's Certificate, as referred to in the Description of Context (page 2). Such students are then credited with the first year of study and can proceed to second year level. Students must have passed grade 12 but need not have a matriculation exemption.

ANALYSIS OF QUESTIONNAIRE DATA

Age of Respondents

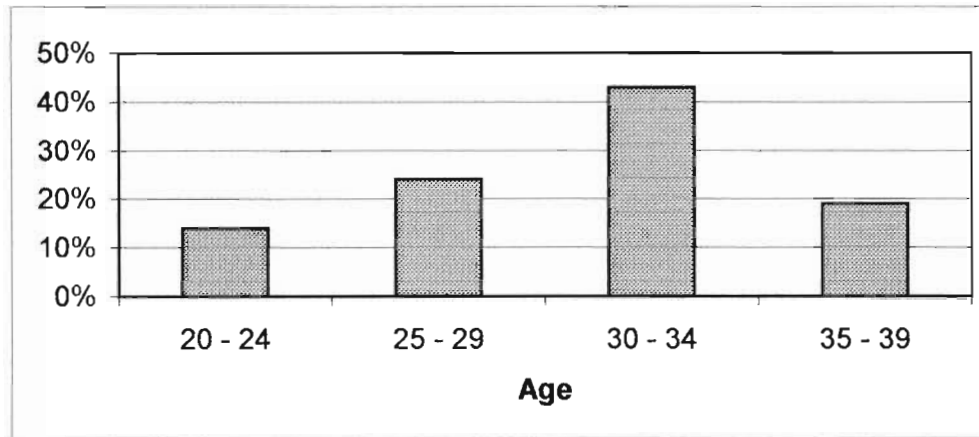


Figure 2: Age Distribution

As the above bar chart illustrates, almost half of the group (43%) falls within the age range of 30 to 40 years. The youngest respondent was 22 and the oldest 39 years.

The fairly advanced age of the majority of the respondents would suggest a long teaching career but this is not borne out by the findings relating to the number of years' teaching experience below (see question A.1 in Appendix 1). As respondents were teachers just prior to registering with Promat College, the supposition is that teaching was a late career choice.

Number of Years' Teaching Experience

As an in-service college of education, Promat College is required to insist that prospective students submit a letter from a school principal stating that they have had at least 3 years' teaching experience before they are permitted to register as either a full-time or a part-time student. The number of years' teaching experience indicated in the responses is depicted below:

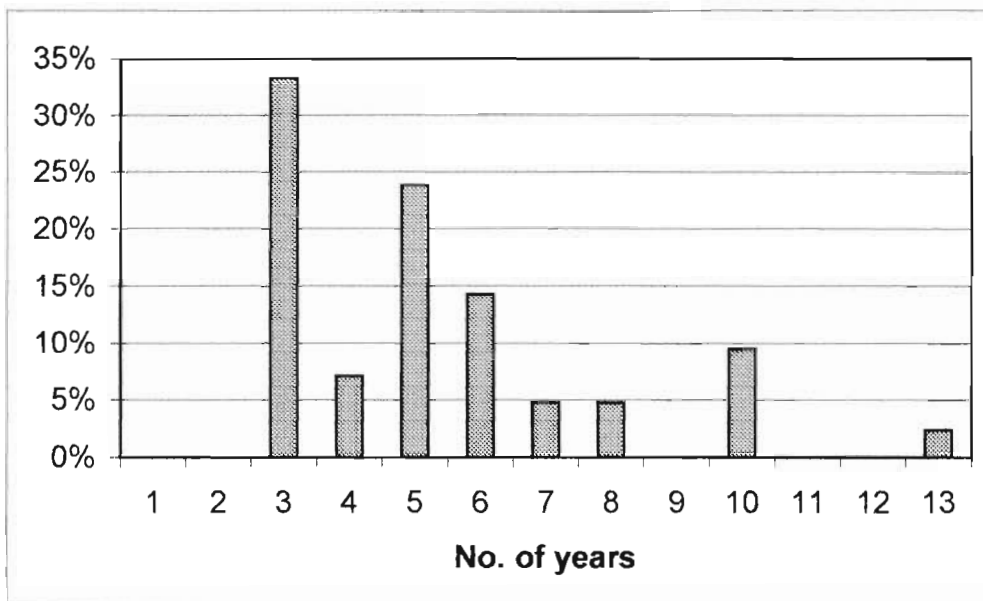


Figure 3: No. of Years' Teaching Experience

Grade Taught

As the following bar chart shows, the overwhelming majority (62%) teaches in intermediate⁴ phase which is consistent with their chosen course of study at Promat College.

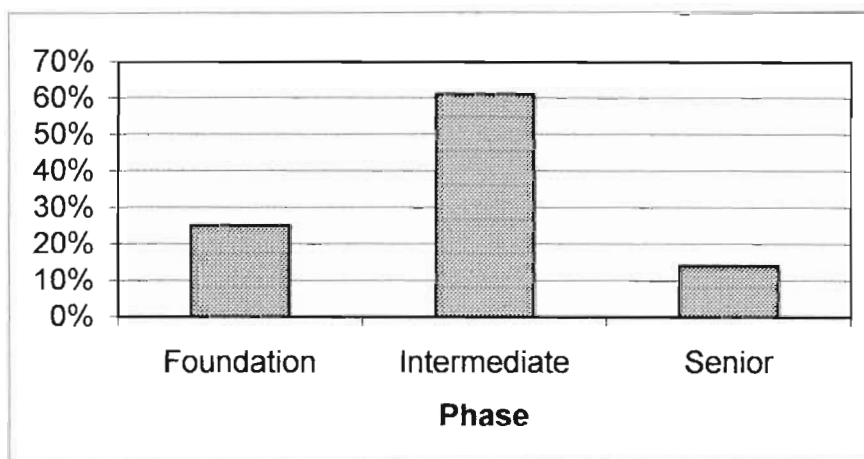


Figure 4: Phase Taught

Home Language

The term “home language” was used in the questionnaire to denote the respondents’ main language, that is, “the language most often used by an individual, in which he or she becomes proficient” (Reed: 1999: 43). The following chart illustrated the predominance of Zulu as the main language of the respondents:

⁴ The terms “foundation”, intermediate” and “senior” phase refer to the first three, the second four and the last five years of schooling, respectively.

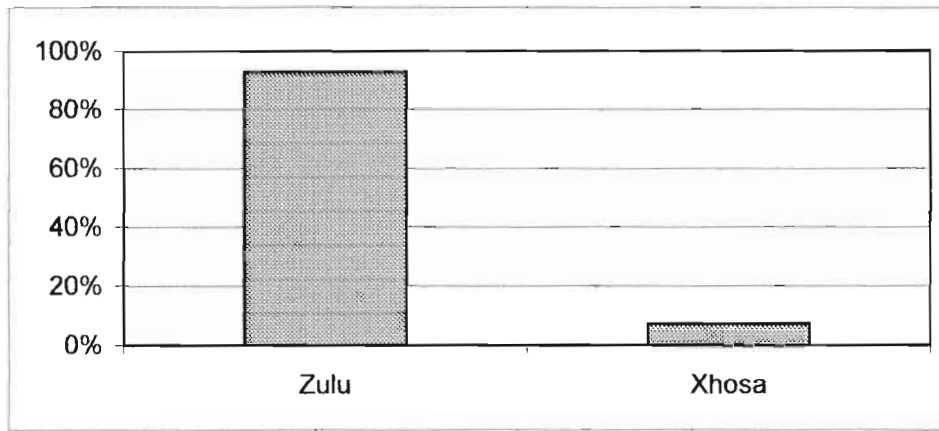


Figure 5: Main Language

Early Experience of Reading

The purpose of this section was to establish the extent to which respondents had been exposed to a culture of reading, in the home or at school. For this reason no distinction was drawn between reading in the respondents' main language and reading in English. In making no explicit reference to the language of reading, the present study has been guided by French (1988) as well as Jackson and Thomson (1997). Both of these studies were conducted in South Africa with students whose main language is not English.

In this section the use of the term "literacy" means the ability to read. It was not possible within the scope of this study to determine the actual degree of literacy of grandparents and parents in the following questions. However, anecdotal evidence suggests that parents and grandparents may have attended school for only two or three years. In the following discussion I shall first record the data from section B of the questionnaire (see Appendix 1) and then amplify the findings by reference to the reading histories.

Grandparents' Literacy

The overall literacy rate among grandparents was approximately 60%, although 29% of respondents did not know whether their grandparents were literate. The following bar chart depicts literacy among the grandparents of the respondents:

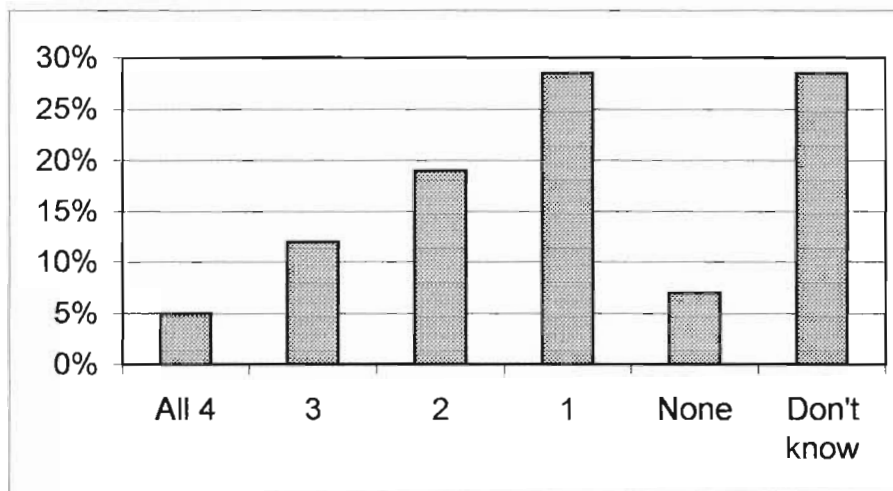


Figure 6: Grandparents' Literacy

Parents' Literacy

The literacy rate among the next generation, the parents of the respondents, was much higher at 81% overall. Only 1 respondent out of the 42 did not know whether his parents were literate. Significantly, 90% of fathers were literate compared to 71% of mothers, suggesting gender discrimination in rural education. Maternal and paternal literacy are compared below:

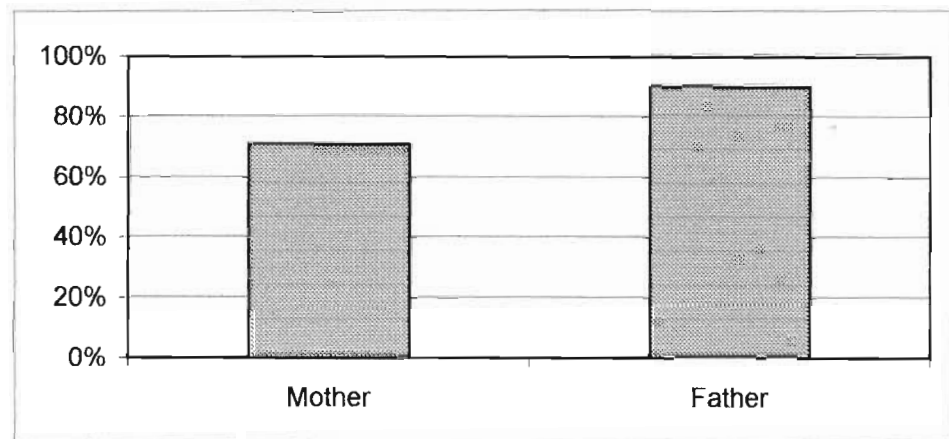


Figure 7: Parents' Literacy

As the following quotations from the reading biographies suggest, the respondents' attitude to education was strongly influenced by their home background:

Nothing I knew about reading. It was only fear and nervous for everything. I did not looking to learn to read and no one at home enjoy reading because my parents were illitarte (sic).(Thembi)

I started to learn to read at school because my parents were illiterate. Although they were illiterate but they encouraged me to go to school. (Melta)

Everybody in my home enjoy reading although my parents didn't get time to go to school. That is why they were enthusiastic to bring us to school. They wanted us to be something they wished to be. (Norah)

Before I went to school I did not read any book because there were no books in the house. My parents were not interested in books since they went to school only to learn how to read and write. (Zodwa G.)

Were You Read to as a Child?

All respondents were able to answer a categorical “yes” or “no” to this question. Responses to this question are depicted graphically below:

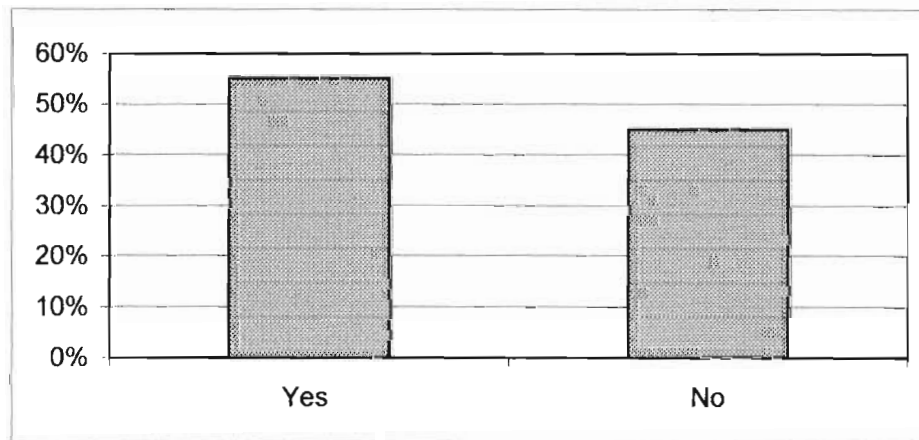


Figure 8: Were You Read to as a Child?

The above findings suggest that 45% of the respondents had had no exposure to a culture of reading at home. In the case of those who were read to, reading materials consisted mainly of the Bible, hymn books and the school readers of older siblings. Relatives who were migrant workers sometimes brought home magazines, such as **Bona**.

Gender of the Reader

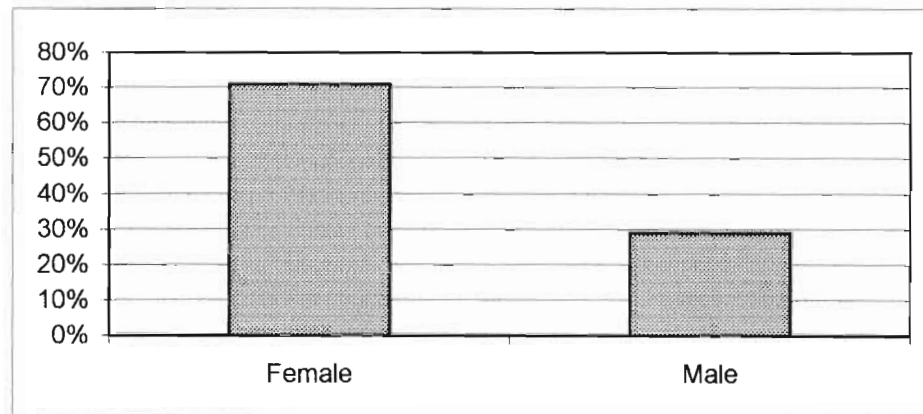


Figure 9: Gender of the Reader

In the case of the 55% of respondents who were read to, the readers were overwhelmingly female (71%), with aunts (25%) scoring almost as high as mothers (29%), in keeping with the maternal role played by members of the extended family. Fathers made up only 17% of readers, despite the finding that 90% of fathers were literate compared to only 71% of mothers.

EARLY SCHOOL READING EXPERIENCES

Respondents were asked to rate their early memories of learning to read at school on two scales. The first (exciting/ interesting/ boring/ terrifying) was intended to determine their emotional response to, and the second (very difficult/ not too difficult/ easy) the perceived level of difficulty of reading at each phase of schooling.

I was interested to investigate whether there was a pattern which suggested one of the following possible trends:

- Reading started off being easy and exciting in the junior phase and then became boring/ terrifying and very difficult as the respondent progressed into the secondary phase.
- An initially negative experience became a more positive one with progress through the school system.

To consider whether the findings revealed the existence of these trends, I shall first quote the findings of the questionnaire on reading attitude and the perception of difficulty, respectively, and then show how these findings are illuminated by the reading histories.

The following bar chart reflects how the respondents' attitude to reading changes with progress through school:

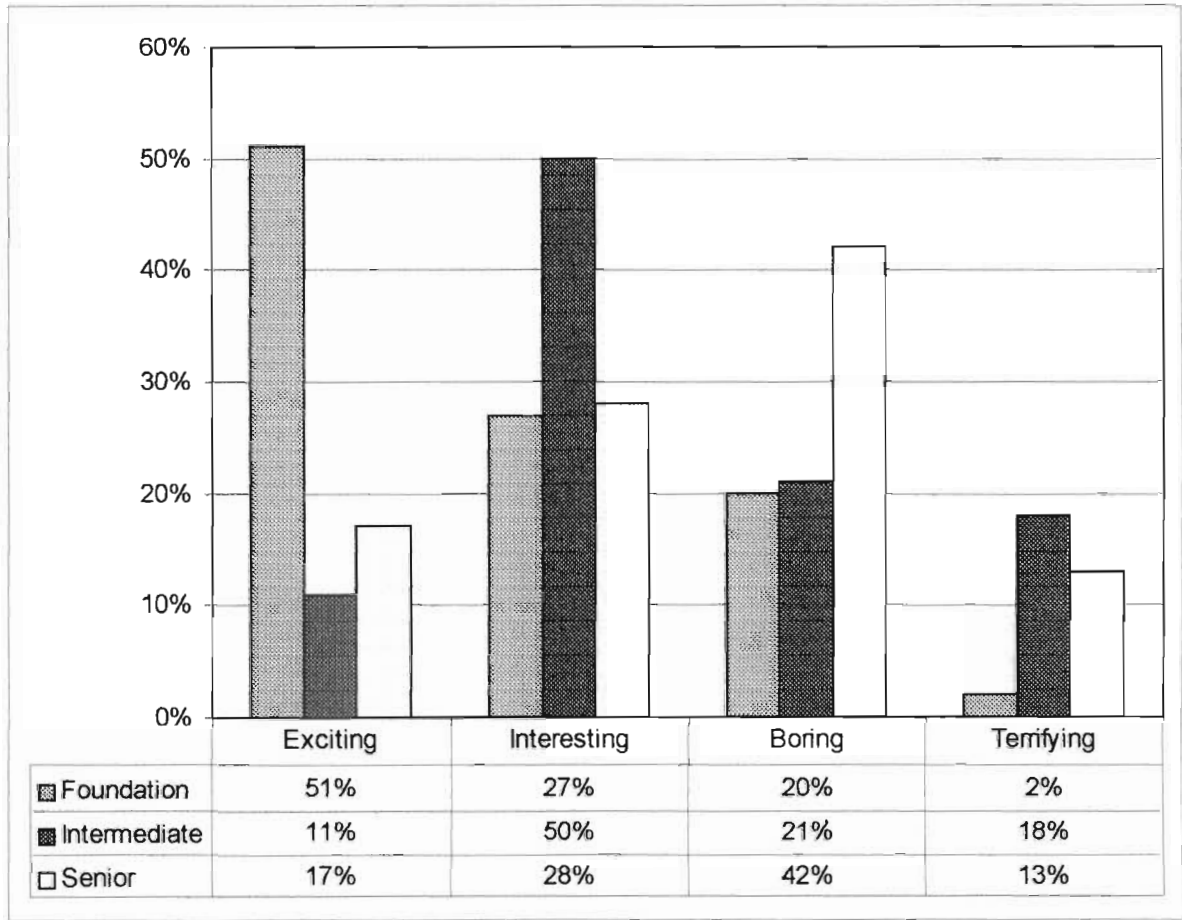


Figure 10: Reading Attitudes at School

In analysing the trends discernible in the above table, it is important to bear in mind that most respondents reported starting to learn to read in English in grade 3, i.e. the last grade in the foundation phase. Significantly, it was in this phase that a large proportion of respondents (51%) reported finding reading exciting. By the intermediate phase, 50% of respondents still found reading “interesting” but by the time the senior phase was reached the highest percentage of respondents (42%) characterized reading as “boring”.

If one adds together the results for the first two categories (“exciting” and “interesting”) as reflecting a positive attitude and the second two categories (“boring” and “terrifying”) as signalling a negative attitude, then a very marked

trend is apparent. Support for the positive statements declines from 78% in the foundation phase to 61% in the intermediate phase and then again to 45% in the senior phase. Conversely, overall negative sentiment shows a rising trend from 22% in the foundation phase to 39% in the intermediate phase and finally to 55% in the senior phase, where negative sentiment overtakes positive sentiment for the first time in a school phase.

The study also investigated how the respondents' perception of the level of difficulty of reading varied with their passage through the school system. The connection between these perceptions and the phase of schooling is depicted in the following bar chart:

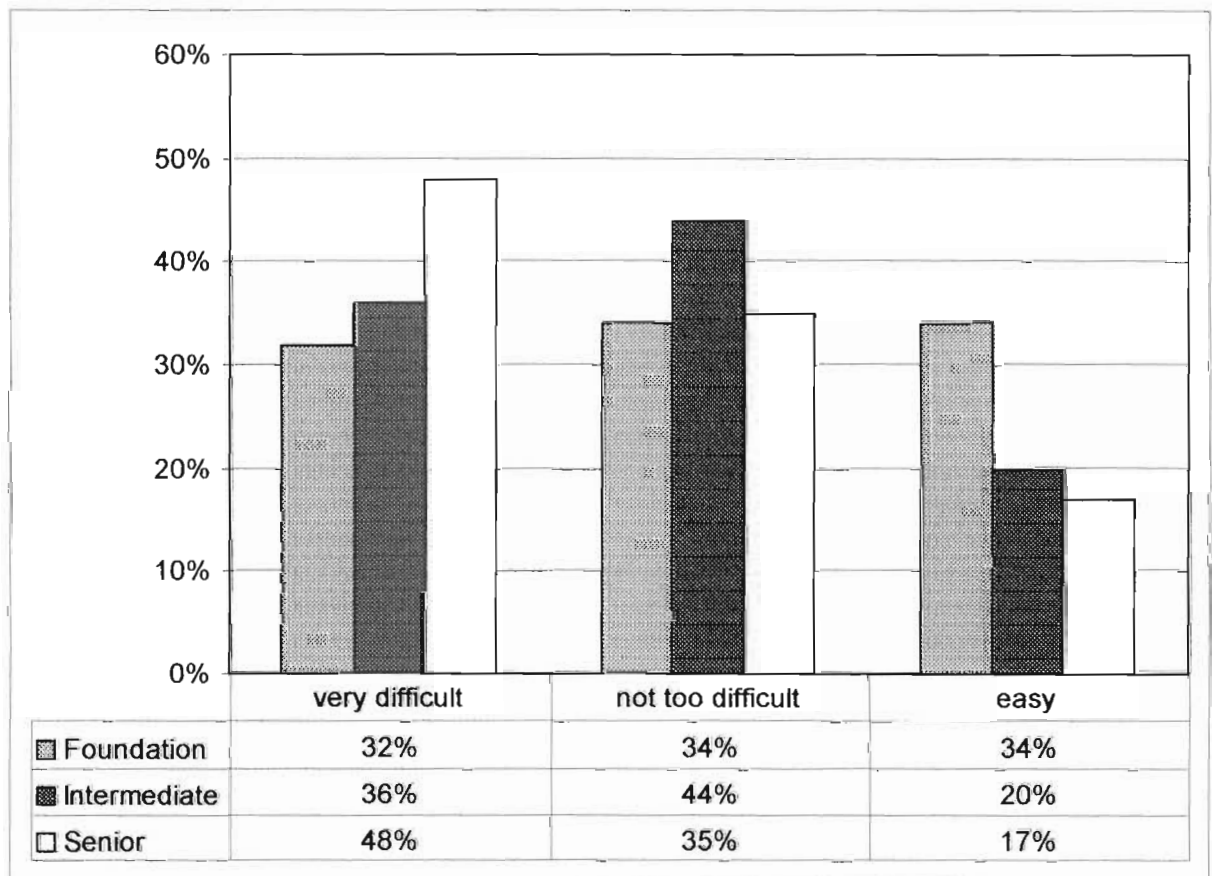


Figure 11: Perceived Level of Difficulty

An analysis of the data relating to the perceived level of difficulty of reading at each phase supports the findings above relating to reading attitude at school. Perceptions that reading was “very difficult” increased slightly from the foundation phase (32%) to the intermediate phase (36%) and then markedly in the senior phase (48%). Equally, respondents were more likely to characterize reading as “easy” in the foundation phase (34%) than in the intermediate (20%) or the senior phase (17%).

Combining the findings in figures 10 and 11, it is evident that in the foundation phase 78% of respondents had a positive attitude towards reading and 68% found it easy or not too difficult. Their exposure to the teaching of reading in this phase had been limited. As reading began to be taught in earnest in the intermediate phase, positive sentiment declined to 61% and only 20% found it easy. By the senior phase, when greater demands were made on the reading skills of the respondents, 56% had a negative attitude to reading and 48% found it very difficult.

Relating the Reading Histories to the Questionnaire Data

The following discussion seeks to illuminate the questionnaire data relating to reading attitude and perceived level of difficulty by reference to the reading histories.

Reading Attitude before Starting School

The attitude to reading to which respondents had been exposed before starting school had a formative influence on the attitude with which respondents started school. Only three respondents who had older siblings at school or family members, or even neighbours, who valued reading, reported looking forward to starting school:

Before I went to school, I was always looking forward to having taught to read. This was because of the influence by my elder brothers and sisters who always did their study at home. To me it became a challenge because I always had that feeling they enjoyed it. (Mge)

I remember that I was eager to read. (Etheltreda)

My neighbours enjoyed reading. They advised me to go to school. They told me about good things happened at school. (Mandla)

One respondent reported viewing reading as connected with intelligence and wealth:

Before I went to school, I thought that reading was for the bright people who were coming from the reach (sic) families. (Zephi)

Reading Attitude in the Foundation and Intermediate Phases

The grade in which respondents started reading in English varied: most started in grade 3, some in grade 2 and one as late as grade 5.

Common to all the reading biographies was the description of the methodology employed in the teaching of reading. This invariably involved a “bottom up” approach which takes learners through the following sequence:

First you learn individual letters and letter features, then digraphs and other multi-letter units, then single words, then phrases and sentences, then semantics or meaning. (Flanagan 1995: 12)

The following description is typical of how respondents were taught to read:

We first learnt vowels. After vowels we learnt to join a word using vowels and consonants. After that we learnt how to make a sentence by joining the words together. (Zodwa D.)

This model of teaching has frequently been identified and criticised as characteristic of Bantu Education (Christie 1985; Davidoff and Van den Berg 1990 ; King and Van den Berg 1991). Janks (1990 : 253) characterizes the teaching in black schools as follows:

[It] has traditionally been based on a transmission model where pupils are passive recipients of knowledge provided by the teacher. Language has been taught using chorus drills, rote repetition and gap-filling exercises.

The effect on respondents of a methodology which relied on repetition and memorizing without comprehension was frequently to instill performance anxiety, especially as it was enforced through corporal punishment:

Our teacher taught me to repeat the words many time, also the sentences we were told to repeat.... without understanding. I turned to hate reading. I was afraid of punishment. (Mandla)

Learning to read was a negative experience because it was difficult for me to pronounce. Above all corporal punishment made me to hate English. (Happy)

We were afraid of the teachers because they were always carrying a stick. (Zodwa D.)

Those respondents who found reading easy in the foundation and intermediate phases were those who were good at memorizing. Frequently, they were those who had started school with some ability to decode letters.

The teacher used to write ten words on the board and then ask us to memorize them. It was positive to me because I enjoyed memorizing. To shout these ten words was very nice to me because I felt that was a game. (Rachel)

My cousin sometimes told me how to write vowels. We used the ground to write. (Nombulelo)

What I remember about reading I always write down on soil with my finger. (Nompilo)

Reading in the Senior Phase

The increased workload and the number of subjects studied in the senior phase exacerbated reading problems for those who had found primary school reading a negative and difficult experience. In addition, the medium of instruction in the senior phase, at least in theory, was English and not the respondents' main language. The "bottom up" method of teaching reading assumes that "a learner must first learn the mechanical and technical skills of

written language before comprehension” (Flanagan 1995 :14). The use of chorus drills and rote repetition in black schools masked the problem that many learners did not understand the meaning of what they were reading. Even those who had enjoyed reading because they found it easy to imitate the teacher by repeating from memory, now reported that their fundamental lack of comprehension meant that they were not equal to the demands of the senior phase.

As I progressed through school, reading became less enjoyable because I had a problem of not understanding words properly. (Happy)

Even in the senior phase the emphasis continued to be on rote learning, with independent thinking being discouraged. Learners were required to reproduce their notes in the examinations. The assessment of English texts focused on “comprehension”-type questions. Almost all respondents reported being given the impression by teachers that reading was for passing examinations:

Teachers told us we must not waste our time on books because we won't be tested on them. (Norah)

Reading was not made important to us besides that we had to know the facts and its summary to answer during exams. (Musa)

The only thing we were looking at was to read text books so that we will be in a position to pass at the end of the year. (Somandla)

The teachers used to terrify us that if you don't read you will fail. (Alson)

Only three of the forty respondents (5%) had been encouraged by their teachers to view reading as providing access to a wider world, although this was connected with material rewards and future employment rather than as a means of personal growth:

They told us the importance of reading was for getting money and to communicate with your employer. (Themabela)

Teachers stressed the importance of being an educated person in our society. (Hlengiwe Z.)

My teacher encouraged and said reading is the key of success in life. Without reading life would be doomed. They told us that as time goes on there would be no one who would sweep outside the street or dig. The machine would do that job. (Swazi)

Attitude to reading in the senior phase was also strongly influenced by the availability of reading resources. Schools were often severely impoverished:

Our school was very poor. We were overcrowded. No windows, no doors. (Rachel)

In these cases reading materials did not extend beyond the Bible and school textbooks and even the latter were often in woefully short supply:

At times only the teacher had a copy to read to 75 students. The learners had to listen and memorize the facts. (Musa)

As will be seen from the findings in sections C and D of the questionnaire which are discussed below, the reading attitudes formed at school still have a strong influence on the current reading attitudes and practices of the respondents in adulthood.

ADULT READING ATTITUDES: RESPONDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF THE USES OF READING

In this section respondents were offered a choice of statements which included the opportunity to single out reading in English, as distinct from reading in an unspecified language. The reason for making this distinction in this section relates to the second purpose of the study (see Introduction), namely to ascertain the extent to which respondents perceive proficiency in English as affording access to improved job prospects and status in the community.

In both question C.1 and C.2 respondents were asked to choose from the following statements which were adapted from French (1988):

- I read only when I have to.
- I read for study purposes.
- I read to know what's going on around me.
- I read to know what it's like to be somewhere else.
- I read to know what happened in the past.
- I read because it will improve my English.
- I read because if my English is good, I will get a better job.

- I read because if my English is good, it will improve my status in the community.
- I read because I enjoy reading stories about people.

In section C.1 respondents could choose as many statements as they felt applied to them whereas in question C.2 they were asked to choose only three and rank their choices first, second and third. The purpose of repeating the same statements in section C.2 was twofold: firstly, as a measure of the reliability of the findings in C. 1 and, secondly, as a means of obliging respondents to focus their choices within a narrower range of possibilities. The findings in C.2 are more revealing because it was theoretically possible for respondents to select each of the statements in C.1, thereby producing a finding of 100% for each statement. Nevertheless, it is significant that, in both C.1 and C.2, a similar trend is observable within the utilitarian category: the three statements receiving the most support are the same in both C.1 and C.2.

In order to compare broader categories, it was decided to group the above nine statements into two general categories, namely those which see reading in terms of its utilitarian purpose (study and job-related) and those which see reading as part of being generally informed and mainly as a source of recreation and pleasure.

The findings in section C are depicted in the following tables:

| USES OF READING | |
|--|-----|
| SECTION C.1: FREE CHOICE | |
| UTILITARIAN (STUDY / JOB RELATED) | |
| I read only when I have to | 36% |
| I read for study purposes | 83% |
| I read because it will improve my English | 86% |
| I read because if my English is good, I will get a better job | 57% |
| I read because if my English is good, it will improve my status in the community | 31% |
| LEISURE | |
| I read to know what is going on around me | 50% |
| I read to know what it is like to be somewhere else | 17% |
| I read to know what has happened in the past. | 29% |
| I read because I enjoy stories about people | 55% |

| SECTION C.2 : RANKED CHOICES | | | | |
|--|------------|------------|------------|-------|
| UTILITARIAN (STUDY / JOB RELATED) | | | | |
| | 1st choice | 2nd choice | 3rd choice | Total |
| I read only when I have to | 5% | 10% | 2% | 17% |
| I read for study purposes | 50% | 17% | 10% | 77% |
| I read because it will improve my English | 7% | 33% | 19% | 59% |
| I read because if my English is good, I will get a better job | 7% | 10% | 19% | 36% |
| I read because if my English is good, it will improve my status in the community | 5% | 0% | 10% | 15% |
| LEISURE | | | | |
| I read to know what is going on around me | 7% | 19% | 5% | 31% |
| I read to know what it is like to be somewhere else | 0% | 2% | 2% | 4% |
| I read to know what has happened in the past. | 2% | 7% | 5% | 14% |
| I read because I enjoy stories about people | 2% | 0% | 17% | 19% |

The following discussion compares the findings in section C.1 (in which respondents could choose as many statements as they liked) and section C.2 (in which respondents chose and ranked three statements). The findings on adult reading attitudes above are in line with the findings relating to the reading attitude acquired at school under the influence of teachers, namely that reading is overwhelmingly a utilitarian skill to be used for study purposes.

In C.1, 83% of the respondents chose “I read for study purposes”: this finding was confirmed by the total of 77% who chose the same statement in C.2 (50% gave this statement as their first choice). In C.1 the highest percentage (86%) saw reading as a means of improving their English, compared with the total of 59% (the second highest percentage) in C.2. When respondents were obliged to rank their choices in C.2, this later statement (“I read because it will improve my English”) received the most support as only second choice (33%), compared to a mere 7% who gave it as their first choice.

In C.1, 57% saw the connection between English competence and enhanced job prospects, whereas only a total of 36% did so in C.2. In this latter section this statement received the greatest support (19%) as only third choice.

Because the respondents live and work in remote rural linguistically homogeneous areas of KwaZulu-Natal where little English is spoken, it is assumed that they do not experience a connection between English competence and better job prospects in their everyday lives.

The relationship between English competence and status in the community was perceived by only 31% in C.1 and by even fewer respondents (15%) in C.2. The respondents have therefore not become aware of the gatekeeping role of English described by Pennycook (1994) in affording access to social and economic progress, power and prestige because of the insularity of their background. This response could reflect a situation in which the respondents' immediate frame of reference extends only to a Zulu-speaking community in which English competence does not confer particular status.

An examination of the leisure category of statements reveals 50% support in C.1 for the first statement ("I read to know what is going on around me"), compared to 31% in C.2. This implies a degree of curiosity about the respondents' immediate surroundings in time and place. However, such desire for knowledge does not extend to other places (17% in C.1 and 4% in C.2) or other times (29% in C.1 and 14% in C.2). The statement "I read because I enjoy reading stories about people" was designed to invoke a response related to the pleasure of narrative. While there was the strong support for this statement (55%) in C.1, this dropped to 19% in C.2, 17% of whom chose this as their third choice. Presumably, such narrative pleasure is satisfied from other sources, such as radio, television and word of mouth. Preference for listening to the radio and watching television over reading as leisure-time pursuits is highlighted in the discussion of the last section of the questionnaire below.

Relating the Reading Histories to the Questionnaire Data

Guiding questions (see Appendix 3) offered respondents the opportunity to distinguish between Zulu and English at each stage of their reading histories but none chose to make this distinction, referring only to reading in general. This supports the view taken in this study that reading should be viewed from a holistic perspective which sees reading as the making of meaning from a text.

In the reading histories respondents made no reference to a perceived connection between reading and studying. Perhaps, as students, they took this connection for granted. Nor was there any mention of English competence as conferring status within the community.

With reference to the utilitarian category, reading attitude in adulthood reflected in the reading histories confirmed the support expressed (86% in C.1 and 59% in C.2) for the statement "I read because it will improve my English". The following quotation exemplifies this perception:

In the past I thought reading should be done only if your are going to be tested on it. Now it is clear to me that reading is important because it builds vocabulary and it helps us to be fluent when it comes to reading English words. (Norah)

There are also frequent references to reading as a stepping stone to material success:

Reading connects with my goals because without reading I will never get a beautiful home and a beautiful car. (Thabile)

Reading connects with what is important because if I didn't read I can't own all this things: living in a big house and driving a Polo Classic or Astra. (Masesi)

It is the write (sic) thing to do. It is the way to success. (Rachel)

In keeping with the low support expressed for the statements in the leisure category in C above, only the following three respondents saw reading as providing access to a wider world, although these views are couched in vague generalisations:

If you read, you are opening your mind to different ideas. (Brenda)
(This respondent had been educated mainly at a formerly model C school with excellent facilities.)

Through reading you experience many things and sometimes you achieve many things in life. (Hlengiwe Z.)

Through reading you can interact with many countries. I can read what is happening to other countries. (Thobile T.)

CURRENT READING PRACTICES

In section D of the questionnaire (see appendix 1) respondents were asked four questions relating to their current reading practices. The questionnaire data are followed by discussion in each case.

| SECTION D: CURRENT READING PRACTICES (RANKED CHOICES) | | | |
|--|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| SECTION D1: MOST COMMON REASON FOR READING | | | |
| | 1st choice | 2nd choice | 3rd choice |
| Studying for your qualification | 78% | 23% | 0% |
| To be generally informed | 18% | 60% | 23% |
| For pleasure and relaxation | 5% | 18% | 77% |

The findings relating to current reading practices confirm the findings in C (Uses of Reading) concerning the very strong connection between reading and studying (78% made this their first choice). The choice of “to be generally informed” as the most popular second choice (60%) is in keeping with the views expressed above that reading is a utilitarian tool. This is supported by the finding that “pleasure and relaxation” was chosen by the overwhelming majority (77%) as only third choice.

| D.2 WHICH DO YOU MOST ENJOY READING? | | | |
|---|---------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| | 1 st choice | 2 nd choice | 3 rd choice |
| Books | 46% | 32% | 15% |
| Magazines | 38% | 25% | 38% |
| Newspapers | 18% | 37% | 45% |

In the above table, which explored preference in reading material, some responses were incomplete. The popularity of books as first choice (46%) is again in line with the discernible trend towards reading for study purposes. The preference for magazines over newspapers may be related to the easier

availability and greater familiarity of the former, as well as the greater linguistic demands of the latter.

| D.3 LEISURE CHOICE (1ST AND 2ND CHOICES ONLY) | | | |
|---|------------|------------|--------|
| | 1st choice | 2nd choice | Totals |
| Watch TV | 26% | 33% | 59% |
| Listen to the radio | 31% | 31% | 62% |
| Work with hands | 22% | 0% | 22% |
| Read | 21% | 31% | 52% |

The above question about leisure choice was designed to establish the relative popularity of reading compared to other leisure-time activities. When comparing totals it is evident that respondents would prefer to listen to the radio (62%) or watch television (59%) rather than read (52%). This high radio listenership must also reflect the fact that radio is more widely available than television in rural areas.

In order to explore the respondents' perceptions of barriers to reading, they were asked to complete the statement "I would read more if". It was stressed that only those who would like to read more should respond to this final question. 12% of respondents chose to leave this question blank, presumably indicating that they feel no need or desire to read more. This finding is consistent with the findings in C above relating to uses of reading where 36% in C.1 and 17% in C.2 selected the statement "I read only when I have to".

The following table depicts the responses of the 88% who indicated that they would like to read more.

| WHAT WOULD ENCOURAGE RESPONDENTS TO READ MORE? | |
|---|-----|
| UTILITARIAN (STUDY/ JOB RELATED) | |
| | |
| Money for further study | 51% |
| Job-related incentives | 13% |
| | |
| LEISURE | |
| | |
| Access to more interesting material | 7% |
| Improved competence in English | 17% |

These responses can be divided into the same two categories as in C, namely utilitarian (job and study-related) and leisure. A significant proportion (51%) of these responses saw money for further study as the factor preventing them from reading more, again confirming the close connection between reading and studying in the minds of the respondents.

RELATING THE READING HISTORIES TO THE QUESTIONNAIRE DATA

The following discussion seeks to establish the extent to which the questionnaire data on current reading practices are amplified by the reading histories. The reading histories confirm that reading is not a priority for the respondents, as the following quotation illustrates:

I use to read on Sundays after church provided there is no game I have to watch over television and when there are no interesting movies to watch. (Musa)

A clear impression is gained that for most respondents reading is a chore to be undertaken only if there is some reward:

I would like to read more, the problem that stops me is that the government of the day doesn't want to pay us the amount that is equivalent to our qualifications. So no one can be motivated to continue reading in such a situation where he won't benefit. (Musa)

Four of the respondents (5%) reproach themselves for laziness, as typified in the following quotation:

In fact I would like to read more to increase my skill of doing things but laziness is one of the things that stops me reading more. (Mge)

One respondent gave an example of the practical use of reading in her everyday life:

Things that is important in my life is handwork like crotching (sic) and sewing. These things connects with reading because I follow the instructions to do these things. (Happy)

Another respondent gave an unexpected insight into her subject position within Zulu patriarchy:

Initially, my husband was not happy about my reading books but he has now accepted me the way I am and I have also influenced him. (Zodwa G.)

IMPLICATIONS OF FINDINGS

This study revealed that the respondents do not place a high value on reading, either in their personal or their professional lives. Reading is not seen as conferring personal power or status within the community, or as a source of pleasure. It is viewed mainly as a tool essential for study purposes and, by some, as a means of improving competence in English which even fewer see as leading to better job prospects. Thus proficiency in English is not highly rated or seen as affording access to social and economic progress, power and prestige.

The investigation of the respondents' early reading experiences gave an insight into what underlies these attitudes. Respondents had all grown up and been educated in the Bantu Education system in the remote areas of KwaZulu-Natal. Many respondents had started school with no experience of text at home, due to low levels of print literacy in the family. Others had older siblings who brought home schoolbooks or family members who were migrant workers who brought home magazines and wrote letters.

Schools were characterised by a lack of reading resources and libraries in the community were unheard of. The methodology used in the teaching of reading, with its emphasis on repetition without understanding and harsh corporal punishment, dampened whatever enthusiasm respondents may have had for reading as a source of pleasure. The teachers' example established

for the respondents a clear connection between reading and studying. The lack of a real communicative context meant that respondents failed to see reading as conferring the power to function within a wider world. Jackson and Stielau (1998) report a similar finding, except that the respondents in the present study reported no affirmation from their teachers whatsoever:

What does stand out is the perceived impact of affirmation or humiliation / punishment from teachers on students' motivations in relation to reading ...in later years. And overall there was an increasing sense of alienation from reading ... as a personally powerful means of communication for the students. (1998: 8-9)

The education which the respondents have received, then, together with the conditions of geographical isolation and economic deprivation in which they live, have produced the reading attitudes revealed in this study. Because the respondents are teachers, they are likely to perpetuate this unfortunate cycle through the “apprenticeship of observation” (Lortie 1975) to which their own learners will be exposed unless sustained and informed intervention occurs.

What is needed is to engender within the teachers a sense of reading as connecting with their existing lives, as well as affording access to the national and global world. Being able to access knowledge, evaluate it and communicate it are becoming increasingly important skills. It is not within the scope of this dissertation to elaborate on possible ways of changing teachers' reading attitudes and practices, other than to point to the critical literacy approach which has been advocated globally (Peim 1993, The New London Group 1996, Lankshear 1997) and proposes an expanded notion of literacy as

a socially situated practice (Baynham 1995), as well as changing strategies for the negotiation of meaning. This would also entail “a shift in emphasis away from traditional or functional approaches with the focus on grammar, correct language usage, and cultural heritage in literature”. (Powell 1998:36). As this study has shown, the existing emphasis in schools has failed to produce competent, avid readers or teachers of reading.

While teachers are upgrading their teaching qualifications, the opportunity exists to intervene in the cycle of “teaching as we have been taught”. It is my contention that changes in the way in which the literature-based English major course at Promat College is constructed, would be the obvious place to start to implement such strategies of intervention. Attempts have already been made in the syllabus devised for this course by Promat College in 1994 to expand the texts of the English literary tradition by including works by writers on Africa, such as Achebe, Paton and Fugard, as well as contemporary African poetry. Classroom practice at this college also takes a communicative, reader-centred approach to the teaching of text and emphasises the negotiation of meaning in the studying texts. Group discussion attempts to counteract the problem of reading as an isolated, solitary and, perhaps, alienating experience.

The moves in the direction of an approach which views reading as socially situated (Baynham 1995) need to be extended to include a wide range of texts such as those drawn from popular and traditional culture (Prinsloo and Ashworth 1994; Lankshear 1997; Hobbs 1997) and from advertising materials.

This would broaden the literature-based concept of text and might encourage a closer sense of engagement on the part of the students with what they are studying. I contend that extending their sense of what constitutes both reading and text could empower them in two ways. Firstly, it would increase their self-confidence as readers, thus awakening their enthusiasm for the notion of reading for pleasure. Secondly, it would enable them to see that, as teachers, they have a wide range of texts with a genuine communicative purpose available in the community for them to draw on for use in the classroom.

Improved reading skills would be to their personal advantage, as they would probably increase their social mobility and economic opportunities. They would also benefit their classroom practice, by enhancing their confidence in themselves as professional teachers. Their learners would therefore have the advantage of being taught by someone able to convey a sense that reading gives access to the immediate as well as a wider world, in addition to being a source of pleasure for its own sake. Such learners would be exposed to a very different apprenticeship of observation from that to which the respondents in this study were subjected.

POSTSCRIPT

The report of the President's Education Initiative Project (Taylor and Vinjevoild 1999), whose purpose was to provide a scientific basis for the future planning

and delivery of educator support programmes, was recently released. Happily, it validates many of the findings of this research. It underscores the centrality of reading in education and attributes many educational problems to teachers' own lack of reading skills. Because of reading deficiencies teachers lacked background knowledge in their subjects and came to rely on teacher-centred pedagogies:

Thus teachers remained within their own very confined comfort zones, and resorted to pedagogies which enabled them to strictly control pupil access to knowledge (135).

Allied to this was the emphasis on rote learning which was seen as "an effective way of teaching since children could not read. Yet rather than teach them more reading, they resorted to memorisation" (135). Little reading was seen to be done at schools:

Books are little in evidence and reading is rare (231).

Teachers, themselves poor readers, made no attempt to encourage a culture of reading or to communicate a sense of curiosity about the world, although they do regard English as a means of "gaining access to mainstream national and global society" (234).

The concluding part of the report echoes the concern that motivated the present piece of research, namely that the failure of reading in schools means the failure of education itself:

Without books to read or write in, schooling as cognitive development cannot happen. All subsequent learning depends on the development of progressively higher and more differentiated forms of literacy (233).

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APPENDIX 1**QUESTIONNAIRE**

As part of my Masters degree, I am studying what Promat students read and how they feel about reading. Your contribution will play an important part in shaping our teaching practices here at Promat College.

Please feel free to answer the following questions openly and frankly. Thank you for agreeing to participate in this important research.

A. BIOGRAPHICAL DETAILS :

1. FULL NAME
2. PLACE OF BIRTH
3. PRESENT HOME ADDRESS
.....
.....
.....
4. AGE
5. HOME LANGUAGE
6. LAST SCHOOL ATTENDED
7. NUMBER OF YEARS' TEACHING EXPERIENCE
.....

8. GRADE TAUGHT

B. **EARLY EXPERIENCE OF READING**

1. How many of your grandparents were able to read? Put a cross in the block which applies:

All 4 ☐ 3 ☐ 2 ☐ 1 ☐ don't know ☐

2. Are (or were) your parents able to read? Put a cross in the block which applies in each case:

Father: yes ☐ no ☐ don't know ☐

Mother: yes ☐ no ☐ don't know ☐

3.1 Did a member of your family read to you as a child? Put a cross in the block which applies:

yes ☐ no ☐ don't know ☐

3.2 If so, what relation was that person, e.g. aunt, mother?

.....

4. How would you describe your memories of learning to read and reading at school? Put a cross in the one box which applies in each case:

4.1 in grades 1-3

exciting ☐ interesting ☐ boring ☐ terrifying ☐

very difficult ☐ not too difficult ☐ easy ☐

4.2 in grades 4-7

exciting ☐ interesting ☐ boring ☐ terrifying ☐

very difficult ☐ not too difficult ☐ easy ☐

4.3 in grades 8 -12

exciting ☐ interesting ☐ boring ☐ terrifying ☐

very difficult ☐ not too difficult ☐ easy ☐

C. **USE OF READING**

1. Only SOME of the following statements will be true for you.

Put a tick next to the statements that ARE true for you.

Remember there are no right or wrong answers. Please be frank.

- ☐ I read only when I have to.
- ☐ I read for study purposes.
- ☐ I read to know what's going on around me.
- ☐ I read to know what it's like to be somewhere else.
- ☐ I read to know what happened in the past.
- ☐ I read because it will improve my English.
- ☐ I read because if my English is good, I will get a better job.
- ☐ I read because if my English is good, it will improve my status in the community.
- ☐ I read because I enjoy reading stories about people.

2. Which of the following are MOST true for you? Give your answer by putting 1, 2 and 3 in the blocks next to your first, second and third choices:

- ☐ I read only when I have to.
- ☐ I read for study purposes.
- ☐ I read to know what's going on around me.

- ☐ I read to know what it's like to be somewhere else.
- ☐ I read to know what happened in the past.
- ☐ I read because it will improve my English.
- ☐ I read because if my English is good, I will get a better job.
- ☐ I read because if my English is good, it will improve my status in the community.
- ☐ I read because I enjoy reading stories about people.

D. **CURRENT READING PRACTICES:**

1. What is the most common reason for you to read? Put 1 next to the most common reason, 2 next to the second most common reason and 3 next to the least common reason:
 - ☐ studying for your qualification
 - ☐ to be generally informed
 - ☐ for pleasure and relaxation
2. Which of the following do you most enjoy reading? Use the numbers 1, 2 and 3 to indicate your first, second and third choices:

- ☐ magazines
- ☐ books
- ☐ newspapers

3. If you had a free choice of how to spend your time, which of the following would be your FIRST and SECOND choices? Use the numbers 1 and 2 to indicate your first and second choices:

- ☐ watch TV
- ☐ listen to the radio
- ☐ work with your hands, e.g. sewing or woodwork
- ☐ read

4. FILL IN THE FOLLOWING ONLY IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO READ MORE. **IF NOT, LEAVE IT BLANK.**

I would read more if:

.....

.....

.....

.....

**APPENDIX 2 : COVERING LETTER TO RESPONDENTS:
READING HISTORIES**

27 October 1998

Dear

Thank you for agreeing to help me further with my research. You will be providing me with valuable information which we at Promat can use in our teacher-upgrading programmes.

I would like you to tell me more details about your early experiences and how you feel about reading now. I have put down some questions on the next page as a starting point only. You don't need to answer all the questions. Remember that there are no right or wrong answers: it is your personal experiences that I am interested in.

Please don't worry about whether your responses are grammatically correct. That is really not important.

Sincerely

ALLISON BROSTER

APPENDIX 3: GUIDING QUESTIONS FOR READING HISTORIES

HERE ARE SOME QUESTIONS TO START YOU OFF WRITING ABOUT YOUR OWN EXPERIENCE OF READING:

A. BEFORE YOU WENT TO SCHOOL

What can you remember about reading before you went to school?
Can you remember looking forward to learning to read?
Did the people in your home enjoy reading?

B. WHEN YOU WENT TO SCHOOL ***B.1. PRIMARY SCHOOL***

What can you remember about learning to read?
When did you start to learn to read in Zulu?
When did you start to read in English?
Can you remember how you were taught to read?
Was learning to read a positive or a negative experience for you? Explain.
Did anyone help you at home?
Where did you see Zulu or English words?
What chance did you have to read English or Zulu?
Did anyone have a Zulu or an English newspaper at home?

B. 2. HIGH SCHOOL

As you progressed through school, did reading become more or less enjoyable?
Did you have access to books other than the school readers used in class?
Tell me where you lived and what your schools were like.
Did your teachers encourage you to read? Did they make you feel that reading was just important for passing exams? Did they make you think that it was also important for any other reasons?

C. WHAT DO YOU READ NOW?

Tell me as much as you can about you read now in both English and Zulu.
Do you enjoy reading?
Would you like to read more and, if so, what is it that stops you?
Where do you like to read?
Tell me about a typical day and how reading fits in.

D. *MAKING SENSE OF YOUR EXPERIENCE OF READING*

Thinking about your past experience with reading and with school and your present experience with reading, what sense do you make of the whole thing? In other words, how do you understand that experience?

What things are important in your life?

How does reading connect with what is important?